

# St. Luke's University Health Network Faces Federal Class Action Lawsuit by Employees Alleging Religious Discrimination

*Employees with religious exemption from network's COVID vaccine mandate slapped with higher health insurance premiums.*

ALLENTOWN, PA., USA, March 30, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Mansour Law, LLC, a plaintiffs' employment law firm in Allentown, PA, filed a federal class action lawsuit today against St. Luke's University Health Network (SLUHN), one of Pennsylvania's largest health networks. The lawsuit claims that, for the past 15 months, SLUHN has violated federal and state anti-discrimination laws by charging only employees with religious exemptions from its COVID-19 vaccine mandate an extra \$1,100.00 per year for their group medical insurance.

The lead plaintiff, Jessica Jennings, is one of about 500 SLUHN employees who received a religious exemption from the network's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. In October 2021, SLUHN instituted a policy supposedly increasing every employee's group health insurance premium by \$1,100.00 starting in January 2022. But under this policy, all vaccinated employees and unvaccinated employees with medical exemptions or deferrals from SLUHN's vaccine mandate received a \$1,100.00 "premium discount" to offset the increase entirely. However, unvaccinated employees with religious exemptions from the mandate received no discount.

Since January 2022, only Ms. Jennings and her colleagues with religious exemptions have been forced to pay an extra \$1,100.00 per year (\$42.31 per bi-weekly pay period) over their 2021 health insurance rate while every other employee's premium has stayed the same. The group



Mansour Law is an Allentown, PA law firm that fights for employees all across PA.

plan is sponsored and funded entirely by SLUHN, and the plaintiffs claim that the network deliberately increased their premiums to “pressure” them into getting vaccinated, despite their religious beliefs.

Ms. Jennings is represented by William P. Mansour, Esq. of Mansour Law, LLC.

“In our view, this case is pretty straightforward,” says Mr. Mansour. “St. Luke’s has forced my client and roughly 500 of her colleagues to pay more for their group health insurance solely because their religious beliefs interfere with its ambitious vaccination campaign. If Ms. Jennings had different religious beliefs that didn’t conflict with vaccination, St. Luke’s would have rewarded her with a premium discount. But because she doesn’t subscribe to the company’s preferred religious beliefs, she got punished with a premium hike instead. So, St. Luke’s essentially gave my client and her colleagues a false choice: either pay more for your health coverage during a period of record inflation or violate your sincere religious beliefs and get vaccinated. We don’t think St. Luke’s can legally do that, and we’re going to find out why it did.”

Ms. Jennings, on behalf of herself and all other affected employees, is suing for violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act. The lawsuit seeks to permanently enjoin SLUHN’s enforcement of the “premium discount” policy and obtain restitution for all affected employees, plus interest, compensatory damages, punitive damages, attorney’s fees, costs, and other appropriate relief.

The case was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and is captioned Jessica Jennings v. St. Luke’s Health Network, Inc., Civil Action No. 5:23-cv-01229.

William P. Mansour  
Mansour Law, LLC  
+1 6103213538  
wpm@themansourfirm.com

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