

**DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING**

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July 21, 2021
For Immediate Release

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DFEH Sues California Gaming Companies for Equal Pay Violations, Sex Discrimination, and Sexual Harassment

Women paid less and subjected to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at Activision Blizzard, Inc, Blizzard Entertainment, Inc., and Activision Publishing, Inc.

Sacramento-The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing filed a civil action in Los Angeles Superior Court today against Activision Blizzard, Inc., Blizzard Entertainment, Inc., and Activision Publishing, Inc. for violations of California's Equal Pay Act as well as the Fair Employment and Housing Act, which provide broader protections and greater remedies for victims than their federal counterparts.

Activision, Inc., founded in Sunnyvale, California in 1979, became the publicly traded company known today as Activision Blizzard, Inc. after the 2008 merger with Blizzard Entertainment, Inc.

Activision Blizzard, Inc., headquartered in Santa Monica, California and known for games such as "Call of Duty," "Battle.net," and "World of Warcraft" allegedly fostered a sexist culture and paid women less than men despite women doing substantially similar work, assigned women to lower level jobs and promoted them at slower rates than men, and fired or forced women to quit at higher frequencies than men. DFEH also alleges that African American women and other women of color were particularly impacted by Activision Blizzard's discriminatory practices.

In addition, DFEH alleges that women were subjected to constant sexual harassment, including groping, comments, and advances. The lawsuit also alleges that the company's executives and human resources personnel knew of the harassment and failed to take reasonable steps to prevent the unlawful conduct, and instead retaliated against women who complained.

Vigorous enforcement of California's civil rights and labor laws, including the Fair Employment and Housing Act and the California Equal Pay Act is a priority. Stronger than its federal counterpart, California's equal pay law requires equal pay for substantially similar work, and FEHA imposes strict liability for certain types of harassment. FEHA also does not impose limitations on an employee's recovery, and extends its protections to interns and contractors. As the plaintiff, DFEH can seek relief against employers that fail to take "all reasonable steps necessary" to prevent harassment and discrimination.

"All employers should ensure that their employees are being paid equally and take all steps to prevent discrimination, harassment, and retaliation," said DFEH Director Kevin Kish. "This is especially important for employers in male-dominated industries, such as technology and gaming."

On January 1, 2021, California Senate Bill No. 973, took effect and authorized DFEH to file lawsuits for violations of California Equal Pay Act, Labor Code section 1197.5.

The case is captioned Department of Fair Employment and Housing v. Activision Blizzard, Inc., et al., Case No. _____.

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The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights law. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit the DFEH's website at www.dfeh.ca.gov.