# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION,						
Plaintiff,						
<b>v.</b>						
T C WHEELERS, INC. d/b/a, T.C. WHEELERS BAR & PIZZERIA						
Defendant.						

CIVIL ACTION NO.

**COMPLAINT** 

**Jury Trial Demanded** 

# **NATURE OF THE ACTION**

This is an action under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title I of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 to correct unlawful employment practices on the basis of sex and to provide appropriate relief to Charging Party Quinn J. Gambino. As alleged with greater particularity below, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the "Commission" or the "EEOC") alleges that Defendant T C Wheelers, Inc. d/b/a T.C. Wheelers Bar & Pizzeria ("Defendant" or "T.C. Wheelers"), which operates a bar and restaurant in Tonawanda, New York, violated Title VII by subjecting Gambino to sex discrimination by creating and maintaining a hostile work environment because of Gambino's transgender status, and by constructively discharging Gambino.

# JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. Jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 451, 1331, 1337, 1343 and 1345. This action is authorized and instituted pursuant to Section 706(f)(1) and (3) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C.§ 2000e-5(f)(1) and (3) ("Title VII"), and pursuant to Section 102 of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, 42 U.S.C. § 1981a.

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2. The employment practices alleged to be unlawful were committed within the jurisdiction of the United States District Court for the Western District of New York.

#### **PARTIES**

3. Plaintiff, the EEOC, is the agency of the United States of America charged with the administration, interpretation, and enforcement of Title VII and is expressly authorized to bring this action by Sections 706(f)(1) and (3) of Title VII, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(f)(1) and (3).

4. At all relevant times, Defendant, a New York corporation, was doing business in the State of New York and the City of Tonawanda, and has continuously had at least 15 employees. Defendant is owned and operated by Christopher Candino and Anthony Candino, who run the business and make all key decisions.

5. At all relevant times, Defendant continuously was an employer engaged in an industry affecting commerce under Sections 701(b), (g), and (h) of Title VII, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e(b), (g), and (h).

#### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

6. More than thirty days prior to the institution of this lawsuit, Gambino filed a charge of discrimination with the Commission alleging violations of Title VII by Defendant.

7. On February 10, 2022, the Commission issued to Defendant a Letter of Determination finding reasonable cause to believe that Defendant had violated Title VII and inviting Defendant to join with the Commission in informal methods of conciliation to endeavor to eliminate the unlawful employment practices and provide appropriate relief.

8. The Commission engaged in communications with Defendant to provide Defendant the opportunity to remedy the unlawful employment practices described in the Letter of Determination.

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9. The Commission was unable to secure from Defendant a conciliation agreement acceptable to the Commission.

10. On April 8, 2022, the Commission issued to Defendant a Notice of Failure of Conciliation advising Defendant that the Commission was unable to secure from Defendant a conciliation agreement acceptable to the Commission.

11. All conditions precedent to the institution of this lawsuit have been fulfilled.

#### STATEMENT OF CLAIMS

12. Since at least January 2021, Defendant has engaged in unlawful employment practices at its restaurant located at 341Wheeler Street, Tonawanda, New York 14150, in violation of Section 703(a)(1) of Title VII, 42 U.S.C. § 2000(e)-2(a)(1). These unlawful practices include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Between January 2021 and May 2021, Defendant engaged in sex discrimination against Gambino, who is a transgender man, by subjecting him to a hostile work environment based upon his transgender status, including subjecting him to numerous anti-transgender comments by Defendant's owners, managers, and employees. Management both participated in this harassment and tolerated it by others.

b. At his job interview in January 2021, Gambino presented as male, introduced himself as Quinn, and did not disclose that he was transgender.

c. After being hired by Defendant as a cook in January 2021, Gambino told one of Defendant's owners, Christopher Candino, that he used male pronouns ("he," "him," or "his").

d. Chris Candino made intentional, frequent and repeated unwelcome and offensive remarks to Gambino about his transgender status, including but not limited to:

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i. Asking a subordinate about Quinn's genitalia, including saying "Does she have female parts?"

ii. Telling Gambino that he was "not a real man."

iii. Regularly asking Quinn invasive questions about his transition, inquiring if he was taking testosterone and comparing it to when he took steroids when he was younger, and making light of Quinn's medical treatment.

iv. Saying that he did not approve of Gambino being transgender and telling Gambino's co-worker, "If I just say "she", [then] that's what she is" and "Quinn's a she."

e. Gambino made clear to Christopher Candino that the comments that targeted his transgender status were unwelcome and offensive.

f. Managers and co-workers also intentionally, frequently, and repeatedly made unwelcome and offensive remarks to or concerning Gambino about his transgender status, including:

i. Co-workers openly equating being transgender to pedophilia.

ii. A co-worker asking questions about Gambino's genitalia.

iii. A manager saying about Gambino, "she's a she."

iv. A co-worker refusing to accept that Gambino's name was "Quinn."

v. A co-worker saying that Gambino was not a "real guy."

g. Gambino made clear to the managers and co-workers that the comments targeting his transgender status were unwelcome and offensive.

h. Defendant's owners, managers, and employees intentionally misgendered Gambino approximately daily throughout Gambino's nearly four months of employment by intentionally using female pronouns ("she" and "her") to refer to him.

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i. This daily, intentional misgendering occurred despite Gambino making clear to Defendant's owners, managers, and employees that he objected to being referred to by female pronouns.

j. Defendant had no process in place for employees to report workplace harassment and did not train employees on how to report workplace harassment, or train managers on how to respond to complaints of workplace harassment.

k. Throughout his employment, Gambino repeatedly told co-workers and managers that he was upset by the anti-transgender comments, including twice reporting to his supervisor, the Back-End Kitchen Manager, that he was being subjected to anti-transgender comments. Despite Gambino's repeated complaints, the harassment continued.

1. Gambino first complained to the Back-End Kitchen Manager about experiencing anti-transgender comments in approximately February 2021. At that time, Gambino asked her not to tell anyone about his complaint. She kept Gambino's complaint to herself and did nothing to address the harassment.

m. After his complaint in approximately February 2021, Gambino continued to experience anti-transgender comments in the workplace from Defendant's owners, managers, and employees.

n. In approximately March 2021, Gambino complained a second time to the Back-End Kitchen Manager about experiencing anti-transgender comments in the workplace and asked for her help. This time, she reported Gambino's complaint to Christopher Candino.

o. After the complaint in approximately March 2021, Gambino continued to experience anti-transgender comments in the workplace from Defendant's owners, managers, and employees.

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p. Additionally, despite knowing that Charging Party objected to being referred to with female pronouns, Defendant's owners and Defendant's managers intentionally allowed coworkers and customers to misgender Gambino on a repeated, frequent basis.

q. Because of the incessant harassment Gambino experienced and Defendant's failure to adequately address it, Gambino was compelled to resign in May 2021.

13. The unlawful employment practices complained of in paragraph 12 above were intentional and comprised a severe or pervasive hostile work environment based on sex (transgender status).

14. The unlawful employment practices complained of in paragraph 12 above were done with malice or with reckless indifference to the federally protected rights of Gambino.

15. The effect of the practices complained of in paragraph 12 above has been to deprive Gambino of equal employment opportunities and otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee because of his sex and, in particular, his transgender status.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Wherefore, the Commission respectfully requests that this Court:

A. Grant a permanent injunction enjoining Defendant, its officers, successors, assigns, attorneys, and all persons in active concert or participation with it, from maintaining a work environment that is hostile to transgender employees.

B. Order Defendant to institute and carry out policies, practices, and programs that provide equal employment opportunities for transgender employees and that eradicate the effects of its past and present unlawful employment practices.

C. Order Defendant to make whole Gambino by providing appropriate backpay with prejudgment interest, in amounts to be determined at trial, and other affirmative relief necessary

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to eradicate the effects of its unlawful employment practices, including but not limited to reinstatement of Gambino.

D. Order Defendant to make whole Gambino by providing compensation for past and future pecuniary losses resulting from the unlawful employment practices described in paragraph 12 above, in amounts to be determined at trial.

E. Order Defendant to make whole Gambino by providing compensation for past and future nonpecuniary losses resulting from the unlawful employment practices complained of in paragraph 12 above, including emotional pain, suffering, inconvenience, and humiliation, in amounts to be determined at trial.

F. Order Defendant to pay Gambino punitive damages for its malicious and reckless conduct, as described in paragraph 12 above, in amounts to be determined at trial.

G. Grant such further relief as the Court deems necessary and proper in the public interest.

H. Award the Commission its costs of this action.

#### JURY TRIAL DEMAND

The Commission requests a jury trial on all questions of fact raised by its Complaint.

Dated: March 30, 2023 Buffalo, New York

Respectfully submitted,

GWENDOLYN YOUNG REAMS Acting General Counsel

CHRISTOPHER LAGE Deputy General Counsel

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION 131 M Street, N.E. Washington, D.C. 20507

JEFFREY BURSTEIN Regional Attorney jeffrey.burstein@eeoc.gov

NORA CURTIN Supervisory Trial Attorney nora.curtin@eeoc.gov

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION New York District Office 33 Whitehall Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor New York, NY 10004

/s/ James E.B. Bobseine

James E.B. Bobseine Trial Attorney EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION Buffalo Local Office 300 Pearl Street, Suite 450 Buffalo, NY 14202 Tel: 716-431-5023 Fax: 716-551-4387 Email: james.bobseine@eeoc.gov

## Case 1:23-cv-00286 Document 1-1 Filed 03/30/23 Page 1 of 2 CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. *(SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)* 

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS				
U.S. Equal Employment	Opportunity Commission		T C Wheelers, Inc. d/b/a T.C. Wheelers Bar & Pizzeria				
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)			County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.				
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Number)		Attorneys (If Known)				
	Employment Opportunity Comi t., Suite 450, Buffalo, NY 1420						
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only	,		RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintifj		
✗ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff			(For Diversity Cases Only) PT en of This State □				
2 U.S. Government Defendant			en of Another State	of Business In A	Another State		
			en or Subject of a reign Country	3 🗇 3 Foreign Nation			
IV. NATURE OF SUIT	(Place an "X" in One Box Only) TORTS	FO	ORFEITURE/PENALTY	Click here for: Nature of BANKRUPTCY	of Suit Code Descriptions.		
<ul> <li>110 Insurance</li> <li>120 Marine</li> <li>130 Miller Act</li> <li>140 Negotiable Instrument</li> <li>150 Recovery of Overpayment &amp; Enforcement of Judgment</li> <li>151 Medicare Act</li> <li>152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans)</li> <li>153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits</li> <li>160 Stockholders' Suits</li> <li>190 Other Contract</li> <li>195 Contract Product Liability</li> <li>196 Franchise</li> </ul> <b>REAL PROPERTY</b> <ul> <li>210 Land Condemnation</li> <li>220 Foreclosure</li> <li>230 Rent Lease &amp; Ejectment</li> <li>245 Tort Product Liability</li> <li>290 All Other Real Property</li> </ul>	PERSONAL INJURY       PERSO         310 Airplane       365 Per         315 Airplane Product       Pr         Liability       367 He         320 Assault, Libel &       Ph         Slander       Per         330 Federal Employers'       Pro         Liability       368 Ass         340 Marine       Inj         345 Marine Product       Liability         Liability       98 Ass         350 Motor Vehicle       371 Tr         Product Liability       380 Otl         360 Other Personal       Pro         Injury       385 Pro         Medical Malpractice       Pr         Other Civil Rights       Habeast         440 Other Civil Rights       Habeast         441 Voting       463 Ali         442 Employment       510 Mote         443 Housing/       Ssto Civil Rights         444 Summer, w/Disabilities -       530 Deter         Employment       540 Ma         0ther       550 Civ         448 Education       550 Civ         0ther       550 Civ         540 Ma       550 Civ         Cov       Cov	ONAL INJURY       0       62         rsonal Injury -       0       69         oduct Liability       0       69         ath Care/       0       69         armaceutical       ssonal Injury       69         oduct Liability       0       71         bduct Liability       0       71         bestos Personal       0       71         uth in Lending       0       72         her Fraud       0       72         pperty Damage       0       74         oduct Liability       75       79         st Orpus:       0       79         ion Detainee       710       79         thence       1       79         ion by Coata       1       79         ath Penalty       0       46         undamus & Other       0       46	25 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 20 Other 21 USC 881 20 Other 21 Labor Standards Act 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Labor/Management Relations 20 Other Labor Litigation 21 Employee Retirement Income Security Act 21 MMIGRATION 22 Naturalization Application 25 Other Immigration Actions	□       422 Appeal 28 USC 158         □       423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157         □       820 Copyrights         □       830 Patent         □       835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application         □       840 Trademark         SOCIAL SECURITY         □       861 HIA (1395ff)         □       862 Black Lung (923)         □       864 SSID Title XVI         □       865 RSI (405(g))         □       FEDERAL TAX SUITS         □       870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant)         □       871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	<ul> <li>375 False Claims Act</li> <li>376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a))</li> <li>400 State Reapportionment</li> <li>410 Antirust</li> <li>430 Banks and Banking</li> <li>450 Commerce</li> <li>460 Deportation</li> <li>470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations</li> <li>480 Consumer Credit</li> <li>485 Telephone Consumer Protection Act</li> <li>490 Cable/Sat TV</li> <li>850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange</li> <li>890 Other Statutory Actions</li> <li>891 Agricultural Acts</li> <li>895 Freedom of Information Act</li> <li>896 Arbitration</li> <li>896 Arbitration</li> <li>899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision</li> <li>950 Constitutionality of State Statutes</li> </ul>		
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	Defendant subjecte	Act of 1964 and T ed employee to ha	ritle I of the Civil Righ	nts Act of 1991 n sex (transgender statu	is), forcing him to resign.		
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS IS A CLA UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.		EMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND:	if demanded in complaint: X Yes □No		
VIII. RELATED CASH IF ANY	<b>E(S)</b> (See instructions): JUDGE			DOCKET NUMBER			
DATE 3/30/2023 FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		TURE OF ATTORNEY OF MES E.B. Bobsei					
	AP	PLYING IFP	JUDGE	MAG. JUD	OGE		

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- **I.(a) Plaintiffs-Defendants.** Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".

II. Jurisdiction. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.Cv.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below. United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here. United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; **NOTE: federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.**)

- **III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties.** This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If there are multiple nature of suit codes associated with the case, pick the nature of suit code that is most applicable. Click here for: <u>Nature of Suit Code Descriptions</u>.
- V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date. Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation – Transfer. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407.

Multidistrict Litigation – Direct File. (8) Check this box when a multidistrict case is filed in the same district as the Master MDL docket. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NOT AN ORIGIN CODE 7.** Origin Code 7 was used for historical records and is no longer relevant due to changes in statue.

- VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity. Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553 Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service
- VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P. Demand. In this space enter the actual dollar amount being demanded or indicate other demand, such as a preliminary injunction. Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.
- VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases, if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

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AO 440 (Rev. 12/09) Summons in a Civil Action

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Western District of New York

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U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Plaintiff

v.

Civil Action No.

T C Wheelers, Inc. d/b/a T.C. Wheelers Bar & Pizzeria

Defendant

## SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address) T C Wheelers, Inc. d/b/a T.C. Wheelers Bar & Pizzeria 341 Wheeler Street Tonawanda, NY 14150

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are:

James Bobseine Trial Attorney U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 300 Pearl Street, Suite 450 Buffalo, New York 14202

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

CLERK OF COURT

Date:

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

AO 440 (Rev. 12/09) Summons in a Civil Action (Page 2)

Civil Action No.

#### **PROOF OF SERVICE**

# (This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

	This summons for (no	ame of individual and title,	if any)							
was ree	ceived by me on (date)		•							
	□ I personally served the summons on the individual at ( <i>place</i> )									
	on (date)									
	□ I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with ( <i>name</i> ), a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,									
	on (date), and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or									
	□ I served the summons on ( <i>name of individual</i> )									
	designated by law to	accept service of proc	ess on behalf of (nat	ne of organization)						
	On (date)									
	□ I returned the summons unexecuted because					; or				
	<b>Other</b> ( <i>specify</i> ):									
	My fees are \$	for travel ar	nd \$	for services, for a total of \$	0.	. 00				
	I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.									
Date:										
Date.	Server's signature									
				Printed name and title						

Server's address

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc: