

# PSH Partner Alicia J. Samolis Quoted in Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly on First Circuit Religious Accommodation Decision

## Description

[Alicia J. Samolis](#), Partner and Chair of the [Employment & Labor](#) Practice at Partridge Snow & Hahn, was recently quoted in *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* following a significant First Circuit decision reviving religious discrimination and retaliation claims against Hasbro, Inc.

The 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated federal and state law claims brought by two former managers who alleged that they were denied religious exemptions from the company's COVID-19 vaccination policy and subsequently faced adverse employment actions. The panel held that, at the motion-to-dismiss stage, the plaintiffs had plausibly pleaded both sincerely held religious beliefs and a causal connection between their accommodation requests and the alleged retaliation.

Central to the ruling was the phase the case was in.

Samolis noted that the First Circuit's decision reflects the relatively low threshold plaintiffs must meet when opposing 12(b)(6) dismissal, particularly in cases involving accommodations and alleged retaliatory acts.

"When Hasbro moves for summary judgment, they ... probably will win," Samolis said. "Here, what the plaintiffs said about [seeking] a religious accommodation was clearly enough, and they alleged a number of consequences that are closely related in time. Even though they didn't get fired as in other cases, this clearly would be enough [to support claims] for discrimination, failure to accommodate and retaliation [for purposes of defeating Hasbro's motion to dismiss]."

Samolis noted that the claim should serve as an important reminder for employers that standards regarding religious accommodations have recently changed.

"I'm encouraging employers to think about religious accommodations more seriously," she said. "It used to be that all an employer would have to show was that there was more than a de minimis cost to avoid a religious accommodation. Now that standard has completely changed. You need to show substantial costs in relation to the business. That means no longer can an employer treat the religious accommodation piece less seriously."

Samolis added that she expects religious accommodation issues to continue growing across the employment litigation landscape.

To see the full article, [click here](#) (subscription required).

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