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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fourth Circuit Revives Race Discrimination Claim in Landmark Civil Rights Appeal

Washington, D.C. — January 6, 2026 — District Legal Group, PLLC announces a significant appellate victory before the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in *Johnson v. Baltimore Police Department*, where the court issued a published opinion affirming in part, reversing in part, and remanding the case for further proceedings.

Attorney Dionna Maria Lewis argued the appeal on behalf of the plaintiff, Wanda Johnson, a former Baltimore Police Department Officer who alleged race discrimination, retaliation, and constitutional violations arising from her termination.

In its decision, the Fourth Circuit held that Ms. Johnson plausibly alleged a claim for race discrimination under Title VII, finding that she sufficiently identified similarly situated comparators outside her protected class who were treated more favorably. The court emphasized that, at the motion to dismiss stage, plaintiffs are not required to establish identical comparators, only sufficiently similar ones to support a reasonable inference of discrimination.

Importantly, the court reversed the district court’s dismissal of the race discrimination claim, allowing that claim to proceed toward discovery and potential trial. The opinion reinforces the principle that employers must apply disciplinary measures in a nondiscriminatory manner, particularly within law enforcement agencies where accountability and fairness are critical.

While the court affirmed dismissal of the retaliation and municipal liability claims, the decision marks a meaningful appellate win by reinstating the core discrimination claim and clarifying the standard for comparator analysis in Title VII cases within the Fourth Circuit.

“This ruling underscores the importance of equal treatment in the workplace and ensures that claims of discrimination receive full and fair consideration,” said Dionna Maria Lewis, who argued the case on appeal. “We are pleased the court recognized the strength of our client’s allegations and allowed her the opportunity to move forward.”



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The case now returns to the United States District Court for further proceedings consistent with the Fourth Circuit's opinion.

District Legal Group, PLLC is a Washington, D.C.-based law firm dedicated to civil rights and employment litigation, advocating for individuals facing discrimination, retaliation, and constitutional violations.

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