

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA


Elisa Zarate, Clerk
Athens-Clarke County, Georgia

JULIE MAUCK,)
)
Plaintiff,) CIVIL ACTION
) NO. _____
v.)
)
ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS)
PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE,)
DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO,)
and FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL,)
)
Defendants.)

NOW COMES Plaintiff JULIE MAUCK, through the undersigned counsel, who submits this Complaint alleging claims against Defendants ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE, DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, and FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, and alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. In what has come to be known in society as “cancel culture,” Defendants ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE, DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, and FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL took actions against Plaintiff JULIE MAUCK to “cancel” her from being able to make a living as a real estate agent and REALTOR®¹ and to otherwise harm her reputation.
2. This Complaint alleges against Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE

¹ “REALTOR® is a federally registered collective membership mark which identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics.” See National Association of REALTORS®, Definition of REALTOR®, <https://www.nar.realtor/membership-marks-manual/definition-of-realtor> (last visited Feb. 12, 2024).

& QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO a violation of Georgia's Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act, O.C.G.A. § 10-1-370 *et seq.*, which provides that a person likely to be damaged by a deceptive trade practice of another – which was committed in the course of his or her business, vocation, or occupation – may be granted an injunction against it under the principles of equity and on terms that the Court considers reasonable. Proof of monetary damage, loss of profits, or intent to deceive is not required. The Court may award costs to Mrs. Mauck and additionally award attorney's fees because Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO willfully engaged in the trade practices knowing them to be deceptive. Moreover, Mrs. Mauck is entitled to punitive damages because she can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the actions of Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO showed willful misconduct, malice, fraud, wantonness, oppression, or that entire want of care which would raise the presumption of conscious indifference to consequences.

3. This Complaint additionally alleges tortious interference with a business relationship and libel per quod against Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL for false and malicious statements made by Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL to others, including to Mrs. Mauck's then-licensed real estate broker and to the Georgia Association of REALTORS®. Mrs. Mauck is entitled to punitive damages because she can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the actions of Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL showed willful misconduct, malice, fraud, wantonness, oppression, or that entire want of care which would raise the presumption of conscious indifference to consequences.

4. Mrs. Mauck is legally entitled to make a living as a licensed real estate agent and as a

REALTOR® free from Defendants’ disparagement that is false or misleading, or otherwise creates a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding. Defendants and other individuals or entities in Georgia that, in the course of their business, vocation, or occupation, willfully engage in falsehoods and misrepresentations to silence people and eliminate their livelihoods need to know that such “cancel culture” tactics are contrary to Georgia law and will be enjoined at a price of costs and attorney’s fees, as well as punitive damages.

5. Similarly, Defendants and other individuals or entities in Georgia that wrongfully interfere with business relationships and make false and malicious statements to injure reputations and to expose people to public hatred, contempt, or ridicule in hopes of silencing them and eliminating their livelihoods need to know that such “cancel culture” tactics are contrary to Georgia law and will be enjoined and the perpetrators will be ordered to pay damages, including punitive damages.

PARTIES

1. Plaintiff JULIE MAUCK is a resident of Oconee County, Georgia.

2. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. is a Georgia Domestic Nonprofit Corporation with a principal office address of 425 Old Princeton Road, Athens, Georgia, 30606 in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

3. Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO is the Chief Executive Officer and President of Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. and, upon information and belief, is a resident of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

4. Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, upon information and belief, is a resident of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5. This Court has jurisdiction over the parties because the Superior Court is a court of general

jurisdiction that handles both civil and criminal law actions. All parties are residents of Georgia.

6. Venue is properly placed in Athens-Clarke County pursuant to Ga. Const. art. VI, § II, paras. III and VI and O.C.G.A. § 14-2-510 because the corporate defendant has a registered office address in Athens-Clarke County and, upon information and belief, all individual defendants reside in Athens-Clarke County.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

Mrs. Mauck Spoke Out for the Protection of Children at a Meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees

7. On July 10, 2023, Mrs. Mauck attended a meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees in Oconee County, at which the Board of Trustees was scheduled to consider whether to move a graphic novel called “Flamer” from the children’s section of the library to the adult section of the library in recognition of the obvious adult-themed content of the book that would require parental consent for child access. “Flamer” is described by BookLooks.org as a book about a young teenage Boy Scout who is bullied while coming to grips with his homosexuality and its religious implications. BookLooks.org states that the book contains alternate sexualities, sexual activities, sexual nudity, profanity and derogatory terms, violence including self-harm, and controversial religious commentary.

8. Dozens of people from Oconee County attended the meeting to speak during the public-comment part of the meeting and to otherwise advocate for the protection of children by restricting their access to adult-themed books, such as “Flamer,” without parental consent.

9. Several activists from outside Oconee County who identified themselves with the LGBTQ+ acronym, including Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, attended the meeting to advocate *against* the protection of children. At the meeting, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL held up a poster with a sexual innuendo message on the top half of the poster that

stated, in rainbow colors, “JOY is ALL ages!” On the bottom half of the poster, there was an upside-down pink triangle with the message “NEVER AGAIN,” which is an apparent reference to the mistreatment, torture, and execution of homosexuals by Nazi Germany. The other side of the poster stated, “STOP COP CITY,” which is an apparent reference to opposition to a proposed training center in Atlanta for law enforcement officers and firefighters.

10. In her personal capacity as a concerned citizen and mother, Mrs. Mauck spoke during the public-comment part of the meeting to advocate for the library to move adult-themed books, such as “Flamer,” out of the children’s section of the library. She asked the Board of Trustees to consider the potential for harm to children and the inappropriateness of permitting the county’s children to access adult-themed books without parental consent, and she asked the board not to cave to pressure from activists from outside Oconee County identifying themselves with the LGBTQ+ acronym.

11. Ultimately, the Board of Trustees agreed with Mrs. Mauck and with the dozens of other people from Oconee County who attended the meeting to protect children. The board voted to move “Flamer” from the children’s section to the adult section of the library.

*Defendants Danielle Carmella Bonanno and
Athens Pride, Inc. d/b/a Athens Pride & Queer Collective Made False and Misleading
Statements in an Email to Bob Allen, who was Mrs. Mauck’s Licensed Real Estate Broker*

12. On July 10, 2023, Mrs. Mauck was a licensed real estate agent and REALTOR® through Greater Athens Properties, which is a real estate firm in Athens-Clarke County. Bob Allen was at that time, and remains today, the owner and licensed broker of Greater Athens Properties. In Georgia, licensed real estate agents must be contracted to work with a licensed broker in order to act as a real estate agent.

13. On July 10, 2023, in an email sent at 11:49 p.m. to Bob Allen, Defendant DANIELLE

CARMELLA BONANNO, identified in the email as “President of Athens Pride & Queer Collective,” which, upon information and belief, is an assumed name for Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC., stated that that entity is “the leading nonprofit organization in North Georgia that works towards advancing the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals” and expressed “deep concern regarding one of your newer employees, Julie Mauck, and her recent discriminatory behavior towards the LGBTQ+ community.”

14. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO stated, “[I]t has come to our attention that Julie Mauck has a history of being an anti-LGBTQ+ community member, being vocal about her discriminatory views, and engaging in harassment towards our community, including queer children and families.” In another paragraph, Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO similarly stated, “[I]t has come to our attention that Julie Mauck, one of your newer employees, has a history of being an anti-LGBTQ+ extremist, being vocal about her discriminatory views, and engaging in harassment towards our community, including queer children and families.”

15. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated the following: “Most recently, a video from a meeting at the Oconee County Library circulated, capturing Julie Mauck making derogatory comments and specifically referring to LGBTQ+ individuals as pedophiles. This behavior not only perpetuates harmful stereotypes but also directly violates the principles of equality and respect that our community upholds. I would like to emphasize that this conduct is in clear violation of Article 10 of the [National Association of REALTORS®] Code of Ethics, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.” Upon information and

belief, Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO viewed a video of Mrs. Mauck's public comment at the July 10, 2023 meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees.

16. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated the following: "I kindly request that you conduct a thorough investigation into this matter and take appropriate action to address Julie Mauck's behavior. This may include providing sensitivity training, disciplinary action, or any other necessary measures to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future. By doing so, Greater Athens Properties can reaffirm its commitment to being a safe and inclusive environment for all employees and community members."

17. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated the following: "I trust that Greater Athens Properties shares our commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive community. We sincerely hope that this matter can be resolved amicably and swiftly within your organization, without the need for further involvement from the Georgia Association of Realtors and the National Association of Realtors. By taking appropriate action to address this issue promptly, we believe that Greater Athens Properties can demonstrate its dedication to upholding the principles of equality and respect for all individuals. Thank you once again for your attention to this pressing matter."

18. The email was signed, in part, as follows:

For Athens,
Danielle Bonanno, CPS-AD, CARES, FPM
(She/Her/Hers) (<https://pronouns.org/what-and-why>)
President
Athens Pride + Queer Collective (<https://www.athenspride.org/>)

19. On July 11, 2023, Bob Allen informed Mrs. Mauck that he was going to cease serving as her licensed real estate broker, though, as further described herein, he did not formally release her as a real estate agent working under his real estate broker license until August 11, 2023.

Defendant Fiona Bell a/k/a Felix Bell Made False and Misleading Statements in an Email to Bob Allen, who was Mrs. Mauck's Licensed Real Estate Broker

20. On July 13, 2023, Mrs. Mauck remained a licensed real estate agent and REALTOR® through Greater Athens Properties, which is a real estate firm in Athens-Clarke County. Bob Allen was at that time, and remains today, the owner and licensed broker of Greater Athens Properties, and, on July 13, 2023, he remained Mrs. Mauck's licensed real estate broker.

21. On July 13, 2023, in an email sent at 2:38 p.m. to Bob Allen, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL asked "about one of the Realtors with [Greater Athens Properties], Julie Mauck, and the values of your brokerage."

22. Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL stated the following: "Ms Mauck was present at the Oconee County Library on the afternoon of Monday, July 10th, where she made a public display of calling the entire LGBTQ community 'pedophiles,' along with calling for censorship of LGBTQ-related material. This is after being released from previous groups for anti-Chinese comments during the COVID pandemic, as well as from previous real estate firms for anti-Jewish/Nazi comments after the removal of a statue downtown. Do these actions align with your values as a company?" Upon information and belief, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL heard live and viewed a video of Mrs. Mauck's public comment at the July 10, 2023 meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees.

23. Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL further stated the following: "On June 7th, [Greater Athens Properties'] social media accounts posted, "We love you, Athens! [hearts emojis]" along with a Pride-focused graphic. It's hard for me to understand how these two statements can

occur without contradiction. I am unable to recommend this business to anyone, and in fact directly caution anyone against it, until the position of the business is known. I hope you will join us on the right side of history by ceasing work with Ms Mauck immediately.”

24. Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL further stated the following: “Here is a link to a news article concerning the most recent situation. Her speaking begins at the 27:27 min mark of the main video.” The email then provided a link to a July 11, 2023 article from an Oconee County news site called “Oconee County Observations.”

25. The email was signed, in part, as follows:

Thank you for your time,
Felix Bell

Defendant Fiona Bell a/k/a Felix Bell Made False and Misleading Statements in an Ethics Complaint Submitted to the Georgia Association of REALTORS®

26. Also on July 13, 2023, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL submitted an ethics complaint against Mrs. Mauck to the Georgia Association of REALTORS®.

27. In the ethics complaint, in response to the prompt to describe “An alleged violation of Article(s) of the Code of Ethics as supported by Standard of Practice(s) (if any),” Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL stated the following: “Article 10 - Julie Mauck was present at the Oconee County Library, in Watkinsville, GA, on the afternoon of Monday, July 10th, where she made a public display of calling the entire LGBTQ community ‘pedophiles,’ along with calling for censorship of LGBTQ-related material.”

28. Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL additionally attached a July 11, 2023 article from an Oconee County news site called “Oconee County Observations,” as well as a partial video of Mrs. Mauck’s public comment at the Oconee County Public Library on July 10, 2023.

29. The ethics complaint was digitally signed by “Fiona Bell” as the complainant.

30. On August 11, 2023, Mrs. Mauck, who remained a licensed real estate agent and REALTOR® through Greater Athens Properties, was served a copy of the ethics complaint by the Georgia Association of REALTORS®.

31. On August 11, 2023, Bob Allen of Greater Athens Properties was also served a copy of the ethics complaint by the Georgia Association of REALTORS®. That day, Bob Allen formally ended his association with Mrs. Mauck as her licensed real estate broker.

32. Between August 12, 2023 and October 17, 2023, Mrs. Mauck was unable to work as a real estate agent and REALTOR® because she did not have a licensed real estate broker.

33. On October 18, 2023, David Steele became Mrs. Mauck's licensed real estate broker, and she was able to work again as a real estate agent and REALTOR®. Mrs. Mauck currently works as a real estate agent and REALTOR® under her own business, Freedom Realty USA, in Oconee County, and she is now her own real estate broker.

*The Georgia Association of REALTORS® Rejected
the Ethics Complaint Submitted by Defendant Fiona Bell a/k/a Felix Bell*

34. On November 9, 2023, the Georgia Association of REALTORS® convened a hearing panel to adjudicate the ethics complaint submitted by Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL. The hearing panel determined that, even though it was an “undisputed fact that the conduct at issue is not related to a real estate transaction,” Mrs. Mauck had nonetheless violated Article 10 of the Code of Ethics, which prohibits discrimination in real estate transactions.

35. On November 30, 2023, Mrs. Mauck submitted a request for an appeal, and, on January 4, 2024, Mrs. Mauck prevailed on her appeal. After hearing oral arguments from Mrs. Mauck's counsel and from the chairperson of the hearing panel, an appeal hearing tribunal of the Georgia Association of REALTORS® reversed the decision of the hearing panel and dismissed the ethics

complaint “because the finding of facts does not support a possible violation of the Code of Ethics.”

36. Mrs. Mauck’s successful appellate submission and argument indicated that the undisputed evidence at the hearing demonstrated that Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL associates with a community of anarchists and that Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL sought to abuse the Georgia Association of REALTORS’® ethics process by using it to harass Mrs. Mauck and to disrupt her ability to earn a livelihood as a real estate agent and REALTOR®.

37. Mrs. Mauck’s successful appellate submission and argument further indicated that the undisputed evidence showed Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL has a documented history of harassing parents and that Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL filed the complaint to settle an apparent personal or political score that Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL had with Mrs. Mauck and other parents who attempt to protect children from access to adult-themed books and other materials. The appellate submission and argument further indicated that the undisputed evidence showed that, on the same day that the ethics complaint was filed, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL additionally contacted Bob Allen, Mrs. Mauck’s then-licensed real estate broker, to pressure him to release Mrs. Mauck and to, thus, prevent her from pursuing her livelihood as a real estate agent and REALTOR®.

38. Mrs. Mauck’s successful appellate submission and argument further indicated that the undisputed evidence showed the factual allegations in the ethics complaint were false. The ethics complaint alleged that Mrs. Mauck (1) “made a public display of calling the entire LGBTQ community ‘pedophiles’; and (2) “along with calling for censorship of LGBTQ related material.” However, at the hearing, the hearing panel watched a video provided to it by Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL of what Mrs. Mauck said on July 10, 2023 at the Oconee County Public

Library, and additionally heard testimony from Mrs. Mauck and over a half dozen other witnesses who were at the library that day. Neither the video nor any witness, including Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, testified that Mrs. Mauck said what was alleged in the ethics complaint. Tellingly, the hearing panel did not conclude that Mrs. Mauck said what was alleged in the ethics complaint. Indeed, there was no such evidence.

39. Rather, the appellate submission and argument indicated that the evidence showed Mrs. Mauck advocated to the library's board of trustees that (1) it protect children from adult-themed books and not simply bend to the wishes of people attending the meeting from outside the county who identify with the LGBTQ+ acronym and who advocate *against* the protection of children, and (2) books that are sexually explicit should be appropriately labeled and moved to the adult section of the library. Thus, Mrs. Mauck did not "call[] the entire LGBTQ community 'pedophiles,'" as alleged in the ethics complaint, and she did not "call[] for censorship of LGBTQ-related material," as alleged in the ethics complaint. Mrs. Mauck's appellate submission and argument stated that the allegations in the ethics complaint were, thus, unproven and that the Georgia Association of REALTORS® could not properly find Mrs. Mauck in violation of unproven allegations in the ethics complaint.

40. Mrs. Mauck's successful appellate submission and argument further indicated that her statements, even if they had been accurately alleged in the ethics complaint, were not slurs, epithets, or any other type of offensive speech based on a protected class under Standard of Practice 10-5. Her statement regarding the LGBTQ+ acronym was critical of pedophiles, if it was critical of any group, and, despite an argument by the chairperson of the hearing panel to attempt to persuade the appeal hearing tribunal to the contrary, pedophiles are obviously not a protected class under Article 10 or under any other requirement of the National Association of REALTORS®.

The appellate submission and argument further indicated that the evidence at the hearing demonstrated that some pedophiles (who prefer to go by the acronym MAPs, which is short for “minor attracted persons”) consider themselves to be part of the “plus” in the LGBTQ+ acronym, which appears to be an attempt by pedophiles to “normalize” their behavior. When the chairperson of the hearing panel, in response to such evidence, sought to argue to the appeal hearing tribunal that the truth does not matter when the truth results in hurt feelings, Mrs. Mauck responded that – and the tribunal implicitly determined that – the truth *always* matters, including when the truth hurts someone’s feelings.

*Defendants Danielle Carmella Bonanno and
Athens Pride, Inc. d/b/a Athens Pride & Queer Collective Made False and Misleading
Statements in an Email to David Steele, who was Mrs. Mauck’s Licensed Real Estate Broker*

41. On January 16, 2024, Mrs. Mauck was a licensed real estate agent and REALTOR® through her own business, Freedom Realty USA, in Oconee County, and David Steele was her licensed real estate broker.

42. On January 16, 2024, in an email sent at 10:19 a.m. to David Steele, Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, identified in the email as “president of Athens Pride and Queer Collective,” which, upon information and belief, is an assumed name for Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC., stated that that entity is “the leading nonprofit in Northeast Georgia dedicated to advancing the lives of LGBTQ individuals across the region” and expressed “it is important to bring to your attention a concerning incident involving one of your realtors, Julie Mauck.”

43. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO stated, “There has been an ethics complaint filed against her with the Georgia Association of Realtors (GAR) for violating ethics standard 10-5, which expressly prohibits discriminatory speech related to protected classes such as race,

religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.” Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated, “The complaint was prompted by her use of derogatory language, referring to the LGBTQ+ community as pedophiles.”

44. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated the following: “Regrettably, Julie has continued to exhibit inappropriate behavior. Following a community meeting at the library, she publicly referred to me as a ‘transvestite’ in a social media post, along with further attacks on my organization and the LGBTQ+ community. I believe it’s important to highlight that ‘transvestite’ is a known slur with a derogatory meaning, especially when applied to a woman of trans experience. This type of language is not only offensive but also disrespectful. This is a clear violation of ethics standard 10-5.”

45. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated the following: “I wanted to bring this matter to your attention as I begin to consider the appropriate course of action. I believe it is crucial for realtors to conduct themselves professionally, irrespective of personal beliefs. I trust you recognize the gravity of this situation and the importance of accountability in such matters. I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you soon.”

46. Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO further stated the following: “I trust that Greater Athens Properties shares our commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive community. We sincerely hope that this matter can be resolved amicably and swiftly within your organization, without the need for further involvement from the Georgia Association of Realtors and the

National Association of Realtors. By taking appropriate action to address this issue promptly, we believe that Greater Athens Properties can demonstrate its dedication to upholding the principles of equality and respect for all individuals. Thank you once again for your attention to this pressing matter.”

47. The email was signed, in part, as follows:

For Athens,
Danielle Bonanno, CPS-AD, CARES, FPM
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers (What is This?)
President
Athens Pride + Queer Collective

48. On February 2, 2024, Mrs. Mauck was a licensed real estate agent and REALTOR® through her own business, Freedom Realty USA, in Oconee County, and David Steele was her licensed real estate broker.

49. On February 2, 2024, Defendant ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and Defendant DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO sent a follow-up email to David Steele stating, “Hi Mr. Steele. I was just wanting to follow up. Hope to hear from you soon. The email was signed “Danielle.”

**COUNT ONE - VIOLATION OF GEORGIA’S
UNIFORM DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES ACT, O.C.G.A. § 10-1-370 et seq.
AGAINST ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and
DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO**

50. Mrs. Mauck repeats and re-alleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through ____, inclusive, as though fully set forth herein.

51. On or about July 10, 2023, in the course of their business, vocation, or occupation, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, willfully disparaged the goods, services, or business of Plaintiff Julie

Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact or engaged in other conduct which similarly created a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding, knowing such conduct was deceptive, by sending an email to Mrs. Mauck's then-licensed real estate broker, Bob Allen, stating that:

a. Mrs. Mauck "has a history of being an anti-LGBTQ+ community member, being vocal about her discriminatory views, and engaging in harassment towards our community, including queer children and families";

b. Mrs. Mauck "has a history of being an anti-LGBTQ+ extremist, being vocal about her discriminatory views, and engaging in harassment towards our community, including queer children and families";

c. Mrs. Mauck made "derogatory comments and specifically refer[ed] to LGBTQ+ individuals as pedophiles" at the Oconee County Public Library on July 10, 2023; and

d. Mrs. Mauck's statements at the Oconee County Public Library on July 10, 2023 were "in clear violation of Article 10 of the [National Association of REALTORS®] Code of Ethics."

52. Between on or about July 11, 2023 and on or about August 13, 2023, in the course of their business, vocation, or occupation, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, willfully disparaged the goods, services, or business of Plaintiff Julie Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact or engaged in other conduct which similarly created a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding, knowing such conduct was deceptive, by sending numerous emails to Mrs. Mauck's then-licensed real estate broker, Bob Allen.

53. On or about January 16, 2024, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER

COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO willfully disparaged the goods, services, or business of Plaintiff Julie Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact or engaged in other conduct which similarly created a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding, knowing such conduct was deceptive, by sending an email to Mrs. Mauck's subsequent licensed real estate broker, David Steele, stating that:

- a. There was, at the time, a pending ethics complaint with the Georgia Association of REALTORS® against Mrs. Mauck for engaging in prohibited discrimination;
- b. Mrs. Mauck "refer[ed] to the LGBTQ+ community as pedophiles"; and
- c. Mrs. Mauck attacked DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE, and individuals who identify with the LGBTQ+ acronym by using the term "transvestite" and additionally violated the National Association of REALTORS® Code of Ethics by using that term.

54. On or about February 2, 2024, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO sent a follow-up email to David Steele, which again asked him to respond "soon."

55. Mrs. Mauck is likely to be damaged in the future by further deceptive trade practices of ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO, such as disparagement of the goods, services, or business of Plaintiff Julie Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact or other conduct which similarly creates a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding, for the following reasons:

- a. The aforementioned July 10, 2023 email from ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO to Bob Allen threatened that ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE

and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO would take additional action against Mrs. Mauck (and perhaps against Bob Allen) by contacting the Georgia Association of REALTORS® and the National Association of REALTORS® if Bob Allen did not conduct “a thorough investigation into this matter and take appropriate action to address Julie Mauck's behavior,” including by providing “sensitivity training, disciplinary action, or any other necessary measures to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future.”

b. The aforementioned emails between July 11, 2023 and August 13, 2023 from ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO to Bob Allen followed up the July 10, 2023 email.

c. The aforementioned January 16, 2024 email from ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO to David Steele threatened that ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO would take additional action against Mrs. Mauck (and perhaps against David Steele) if David Steele did not give “prompt attention to this matter” and respond “soon” to ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO.

d. The aforementioned February 2, 2024 email from ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO to David Steele followed up the January 16, 2024 email and asked him to respond “soon.”

56. In addition, the fact that ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO sent emails to Mrs. Mauck’s licensed real estate broker and then sent emails to Mrs. Mauck’s new licensed real estate broker demonstrates that the actions are not likely to cease. Moreover, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a

ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO sent emails to Mrs. Mauck's licensed real estate broker on January 16, 2024 and February 2, 2024 even after the Georgia Association of REALTORS® determined that Mrs. Mauck had not violated its Code of Ethics.

57. If these actions by ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO continue, then Mrs. Mauck will be harmed in that, among other things, her ability to earn a livelihood as a real estate agent and REALTOR® would be harmed.

58. An injunction prohibiting ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO from continuing to willfully disparage the goods, services, or business of Mrs. Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact and from continuing to engage in other conduct which will similarly create a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding, knowing such conduct is deceptive, would remedy the harm that such actions would cause to Mrs. Mauck.

59. ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO willfully disparaged the goods, services, or business of Plaintiff Julie Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact or engaged in other conduct which similarly created a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding, knowing such conduct was deceptive, because, upon information and belief, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO viewed a video of Mrs. Mauck's public comment at the July 10, 2023 meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees and, therefore, knew the statements within its emails to Bob Allen and David Steele were false or misleading or created a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding.

60. For the same reason, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO showed willful misconduct, malice, fraud, wantonness, oppression, or that entire want of care which would raise the presumption of conscious indifference to consequences.

61. DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO's aforementioned actions between July 10, 2023 and February 2, 2024 were done within the course and scope of DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO's employment with ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE, and ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE ratified the actions afterwards. As such, ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE is vicariously liable for DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO's actions as well as directly liable.

COUNT TWO – TORTIOUS INTERFERENCE WITH A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

AGAINST FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL

62. Mrs. Mauck repeats and re-alleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through __, inclusive, as though fully set forth herein.

63. On or about July 13, 2023, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL acted improperly in that FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, knowing that Bob Allen was Mrs. Mauck's then-licensed real estate broker, sent an email to Bob Allen in which FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL falsely and maliciously stated that Mrs. Mauck "made a public display of calling the entire LGBTQ community 'pedophiles,' along with calling for censorship of LGBTQ-related material." FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL also falsely and maliciously stated that Mrs. Mauck was "released from previous groups for anti-Chinese comments during the COVID pandemic, as well as from previous real estate firms for anti-Jewish/Nazi comments after the removal of a statue downtown."

64. On or about July 13, 2023, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL acted improperly in that FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, knowing that Bob Allen was Mrs. Mauck's then-licensed real estate broker, submitted an ethics complaint to the Georgia Association of REALTORS®, which, on or about August 11, 2023 was served by the Georgia Association of REALTORS® on Bob Allen. In the ethics complaint, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL falsely and maliciously stated that Mrs. Mauck "made a public display of calling the entire LGBTQ community 'pedophiles,' along with calling for censorship of LGBTQ-related material."

65. FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL acted without privilege because FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL was neither a party to any contract between Bob Allen and Mrs. Mauck nor a third-party beneficiary to any contract between Bob Allen and Mrs. Mauck. Rather, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL was a stranger to the business relationship between Bob Allen and Mrs. Mauck.

66. FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL acted purposely and with malice and with intent to injure Mrs. Mauck in that FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL expressly stated in the July 13, 2023 email to Bob Allen that he should "ceas[e] work with Ms. Mauck immediately" and in that FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL believed the submission of an ethics complaint to the Georgia Association of REALTORS® would increase the likelihood that Bob Allen would cease serving as Mrs. Mauck's licensed real estate broker.

67. As a direct result of the email sent to Bob Allen and the submission of the ethics complaint to the Georgia Association of REALTORS® by FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL induced Bob Allen into not continuing a business relationship with Mrs. Mauck in that, on or about August 11, 2023, after being served with the ethics complaint, Bob Allen removed Mrs. Mauck's association with his broker license, which caused Mrs. Mauck to be without a broker and therefore unable to work as a real estate agent and REALTOR®.

68. The conduct and actions of FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL directly and proximately caused Mrs. Mauck to suffer pecuniary injury in that she was without a broker and therefore suffered damages from being unable to work as a real estate agent and REALTOR®.

69. Upon information and belief, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL heard live and viewed a video of Mrs. Mauck's public comment at the July 10, 2023 meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees and, therefore, knew that the statements made in the July 13, 2023 email and ethics complaint submission were false and intentionally made the statements knowing of their falsity. Therefore, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL showed willful misconduct, malice, fraud, wantonness, oppression, or that entire want of care which would raise the presumption of conscious indifference to consequences.

COUNT THREE – LIBEL PER QUOD

AGAINST FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL

70. Mrs. Mauck repeats and re-alleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in Paragraphs 1 through ___, inclusive, as though fully set forth herein.

71. On or about July 13, 2023, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL made false and malicious statements and uttered disparaging words productive of special damage which flowed naturally therefrom, in the absence of a privilege to do so, by stating that Mrs. Mauck “made a public display of calling the entire LGBTQ community ‘pedophiles,’ along with calling for censorship of LGBTQ-related material.”

72. The false and malicious statements were made in a negligent manner or with actual malice about Mrs. Mauck in an ethics complaint to the Georgia Association of REALTORS®, and, on or about August 11, 2023, the ethics complaint was served by the Georgia Association of

REALTORS® on Bob Allen, tending to injure the reputation of Mrs. Mauck and exposing Mrs. Mauck to public hatred, contempt, or ridicule.

73. On or about August 11, 2023, after being served with the ethics complaint, Bob Allen removed Mrs. Mauck's association with his broker license, which caused Mrs. Mauck to be without a broker and therefore suffer damages from being unable to work as a real estate agent and REALTOR®.

74. Additionally, Mrs. Mauck incurred attorney's fees associated with defending herself from the false allegations in the ethics complaint submitted by Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL to the Georgia Association of REALTORS®.

75. Upon information and belief, Defendant FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL heard live and viewed a video of Mrs. Mauck's public comment at the July 10, 2023 meeting of the Oconee County Public Library Board of Trustees and, therefore, knew that the statements made in the July 13, 2023 email and ethics complaint submission were false and intentionally made the statements knowing of their falsity. Therefore, FIONA BELL a/k/a FELIX BELL showed willful misconduct, malice, fraud, wantonness, oppression, or that entire want of care which would raise the presumption of conscious indifference to consequences.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff JULIE MAUCK requests a trial by jury on all claims for which she has a constitutional or statutory right and respectfully requests judgment against Defendants as follows:

1. Injunctive relief against ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE and DANIELLE CARMELLA BONANNO to require Defendants (1) to cease and desist from engaging in deceptive trade practices against Mrs. Mauck, including but not limited to

disparaging the goods, services, or business of Mrs. Mauck by any false or misleading representation of fact or engaging in other conduct which similarly creates a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding; (2) to communicate to Bob Allen, Mrs. Mauck's then-licensed real estate broker, and to David Steele, Mrs. Mauck's subsequent licensed real estate broker, that Defendants' July 10, 2023 and January 16, 2024 emails, respectively, and any all follow-up emails, contained falsehoods and misleading misrepresentations of fact that created a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding; (3) to apologize to Mrs. Mauck for engaging in deceptive trade practices against Mrs. Mauck, including but not limited to disparaging the goods, services, or business of Mrs. Mauck by false or misleading representation of fact or engaging in other conduct which similarly creates a likelihood of confusion or of misunderstanding; and (4) to post a prominent apology to Mrs. Mauck on the homepage of the website of ATHENS PRIDE, INC. d/b/a ATHENS PRIDE & QUEER COLLECTIVE for no less than thirty (30) days;

2. Injunctive relief against all Defendants to require Defendants to cease and desist from making false and malicious statements to injure Mrs. Mauck's reputation and to expose her to public hatred, contempt, or ridicule;

3. Compensatory damages against all Defendants to compensate Mrs. Mauck for actual damages;

4. Punitive damages against all Defendants calculated to be sufficient to deter the malicious, willful, wanton, and reckless conduct of Defendants in the future;

5. Costs of this action and attorneys' fees against all Defendants; and

6. Such other relief that this Court deems proper and just.

Respectfully submitted,

VOGEL LAW FIRM PLLC

/s/ Jonathan A. Vogel

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