

PARTNER

Ariel G. Sullivan

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OVERVIEW

Ariel Sullivan is a labor and employment lawyer with extensive experience in Massachusetts and the U.S. as both a litigator and day-to-day advisor for privately-owned businesses, startups and nonprofits in a variety of sectors. These include higher education, healthcare, human services, transportation, manufacturing, software and technology.

In her role as advisor, Ariel is committed to understanding her clients' businesses, listening to their concerns and providing guidance and solutions suited to fit their needs and growth. She assists clients on a daily basis in all facets of employment law, including hiring, termination, wage and hour practices, personnel policies and handbooks, leaves of absence, non-competes, internal investigations, union avoidance and unfair labor practices, employee discipline and diversity initiatives. Ariel also helps clients with employment-related immigration matters, such as work authorization (Form I-9) compliance, training, and audits, labor certification, temporary working visas and lawful permanent residency.

When disputes arise, Ariel's clients rely on her to be their advocate during all phases of litigation. She regularly represents clients in state and federal courts and regulatory agencies, including the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the National Labor Relations Board, the Department of Labor and the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Her objective is to reach an efficient, cost-effective end to disputes that achieves the client's best, strategic interests. As Ariel's cases often involve sensitive claims of sexual harassment, discrimination and retaliation, she strives to be compassionate without letting emotions interfere with a client's ability to make difficult decisions. Clients have a high regard for Ariel's writing and presentation skills and analytical ability, combined with her technical skills, empathy, reliability and strong PR sense.

Ariel's higher education clients rely on her for help with faculty and staff employment issues as well as student affairs. She works closely with colleges and universities to address complex issues, such as student discipline, disability services and accommodations, subpoenas, FERPA compliance and foreign students. In addition, Ariel frequently assists institutions of higher education in responding to allegations of sexual assault on campus, conducting investigations and providing training to various constituencies on campus, including Title IX coordinators, investigators and adjudicators, campus police and students. "I help my college and university clients and their Title IX coordinators," she notes, "with the long-term and the day-to-day complexities of Title IX and revisions to policies and procedures in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations and guidance. My goal is to be proactive and help my clients stay out in front of

regulatory compliance issues.”

Ariel is a frequent contributor to Bowditch & Dewey’s monthly [Campus Counsel](#) newsletter and blog. In addition, she coordinates the firm’s College & University Roundtable and Annual Law Update seminars, for which she is also a frequent presenter.

Before Bowditch

Ariel was previously a trial attorney at a Washington, DC-based law firm, where she represented professionals, corporations and institutions of higher education in medical malpractice, products liability and employment discrimination matters before state and federal courts. She independently tried more than a dozen bench trials.

Besides work

Ariel spends her spare time with her family, including her two young children, who test her negotiating skills on a daily basis.

EXPERIENCE

A thorny civil rights claim dismissed on behalf of a nonprofit client

Ariel’s client, a private, nonprofit company providing substance-abuse and mental-health treatment to Massachusetts inmates, faced a civil rights lawsuit. “The plaintiff was a serial litigant,” according to Ariel, “who tried to get his case removed to a more favorable judicial venue.” In this case, he lodged a lengthy complaint in federal court, which was dismissed when he was denied the ability to proceed *in forma pauperis*. Next, he filed an application for a *writ of habeas corpus* with the Supreme Court of the United States, which was also denied. When the serial litigant filed again in state court, Ariel successfully argued a motion to dismiss all counts of his complaint.

Dismissal of discrimination complaint against a Massachusetts college by a long-term employee

A private college in Massachusetts turned to Ariel when a long-serving officer on its campus police force filed a claim with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination alleging age and race discrimination. Ariel successfully obtained a lack of probable cause finding and dismissal on behalf of the college.

AFFILIATIONS

PROFESSIONAL/COMMUNITY

- Chair, Labor and Employment Law Section of the Worcester County Bar Association
- Member, Massachusetts Bar Association, Maryland State Bar Association and District of Columbia Bar Association
- Member, American Immigration Lawyers Association
- Member, National Association of College and University Attorneys

PREVIOUS

- Member, Board of Directors, United Way of Tri-County

ARTICLES & TALKS

ARTICLES

- [“Anti-Sexual Harassment Training: What Works and What Doesn’t”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, November 21, 2017
- [“So You’ve Received An MCAD Complaint”](#), Massachusetts Family Business Magazine, March 27, 2015
- [“Illegal Procedure? Title IX and Sexual Assault”](#), New England Journal of Higher Education, January 16, 2015
- [“The Wait Is Over: New Form I-9 Published and Available For Immediate Use By Employers”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, March 11, 2013
- [“Discrimination Against Unemployed Jobseekers May Soon Be Illegal”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, September 19, 2011

TALKS

- [“Security & Community Relations: An Exclusive Talk with William Evans”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, South Hadley/Framingham, October 5 & 12, 2018
- [“Addressing the #MeToo Movement in Higher Education”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, South Hadley/Framingham/Worcester, March 2018
- [“So, What Do We Do Now? Title IX in the Time of Trump”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/South Hadley, Massachusetts, October/November 2017
- [“Student Mental Health and the Law”](#), Association of Independent Colleges & Universities in Massachusetts (AICUM), March 23, 2017
- [“Managing Student, Faculty and Staff Mental Health Disabilities”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/South Hadley, Massachusetts, March 2017
- [“From Campus to the Courtroom: Recent Developments in Title IX Litigation”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/South Hadley, Massachusetts, September/October 2016
- [“7th Annual Federal and State Employment Law Update”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/Newton/South Hadley, Massachusetts, January/February 2016
- [“Maternity Leave, Short and Long Term Disability and the Domestic Violence Leave Act”](#), North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce Human Resource Council, November 18, 2015
- [“Leave Me Alone: A Primer for Understanding and Navigating the Laws Related to Employee Leaves of Absence”](#), Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts Fall Symposium, October 8, 2015
- [“Title IX, VAWA & The Employment Relationship: Employee and Faculty Rights, Obligations, and Responsibilities”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/South Hadley, Massachusetts, September/October 2015
- [“Going the Distance: Legal Concerns Surrounding Internet-Based Education”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/South Hadley, Massachusetts, April 2015
- [“6th Annual Federal and State Employment Law Update”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Newton/South Hadley, Massachusetts, January/February 2015
- [“Discrimination and Harassment Training for Supervisors”](#), North Central Chamber of Commerce, October 15, 2014
- [“The Campus SaVE Act: Are You Ready for the October 1st Deadline?”](#), Bowditch & Dewey, Worcester/South Hadley, Massachusetts, September 2014

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Massachusetts

- District of Columbia
- Maryland

EDUCATION

- J.D., Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law
- B.A., Emory University