



## The Firing of Ethan St. Pierre: *Gender Identity Employment Discrimination in Massachusetts*



My name is Ethan St. Pierre, and I was fired for being a transgender man.

In February of 2001, I was hired by Barton Protective Services as a Junior Manager supervising the security officers. In this position I was responsible for the security staff of every Sun Microsystems location on the East Coast of the United States and Canada. My office was based in Burlington, Massachusetts, at the second largest Sun Microsystems campus in the United States. My duties included supervising thirty employees, including payroll and scheduling round-the-clock shifts, as well as being on call to respond to crisis and emergency situations. In addition to my assigned duties, I volunteered to work every holiday, and I worked extra shifts when people called in sick. In my first year I received a number of positive performance reviews which resulted in pay raises.

In early 2002 I began hormone therapy to transition from female to male. I set up an appointment with the human resource department of Sun Microsystems to inform them of my pending transition and the physical changes that would soon be occurring. I met with my immediate supervisor at Barton and the manager of security for Sun Microsystems. Based on that meeting I felt that my transition was not an issue. Later I met with the team I was managing, explained my transition, and asked that they all refer to me with male pronouns and by my chosen name, Ethan. All the members of this team were respectful, used my chosen name and pronoun, and carried on business as usual.

In July of 2002, the security manager for Sun Microsystems saw me for the first time since we had discussed my plans to transition and I began hormone therapy six months earlier. The security manager seemed startled by my appearance. I had started to exhibit physical male characteristics, such as facial hair. From that moment on, little by little, my responsibilities were taken away from me. In the meantime, my manager at Barton was replaced by someone who consistently spoke down to me, referred to me using improper pronouns, and spoke to people on my team about my transition and his disapproval of my "lifestyle."

In February of 2003, I was removed from my position at Sun Microsystems. I was told by my supervisor that I was being removed because the security manager employed by Sun Microsystems thought that I was no longer capable of performing my job, due to my gender transition. I was stunned, as all of my previous performance evaluations were impeccable and included significant pay raises.

I tried repeatedly to contact the human resource department at Barton Protective Services to be placed at another location, but no phone calls were ever returned. I went to the home office, located at the Prudential Building in Boston, but since I had turned in my pass and no one at Barton would verify my identity, I was denied access to the floor where Barton Protective Services is located.

I then filed for unemployment and received it without contest from Barton, but this experience overall has resulted in financial and personal losses that continue to be devastating for me. I am a former police officer with significant training and certification in first responder, confined space rescue and Hazmat, but due to Barton Protective Services giving poor employment references about me to other potential employers, the security field is closed off to me. I was fired, not for my job performance, but because my employer was uncomfortable with my gender transition, which did not interfere with my job, how I supervised other employees, or performed my duties.