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Titan Of The Plaintiffs Bar: Brown Goldstein's Eve Hill

By **Adam Lidgett**

Law360 (May 3, 2023, 1:33 PM EDT) -- Eve Hill has always thought that people should fight for fairness in life, an argument she started to sharpen by facing off against her own mother in her childhood home in the rural Maine town of Union.





Eve Hill

Brown Goldstein

Why She Chose Civil Rights Law:

"Injustice makes me mad, and civil rights law is one of the places where you can actually do something about being angry about injustice."

Her family didn't have much money, and she said it was a place where "injustice was everywhere." A lot of families never made better lives for their children, she said, noting that experience has influenced her current outlook as an attorney.

"My mother would say I would always argue with her and ... stomp my foot on the floor and say, 'It's not fair.' And she would say, 'Life's not fair.' And I would say, 'Fix it.' So when I told her I was going to be a lawyer, she said, 'Of course you are,'" Hill said.

Fairness is something she said she fights for in her work as a partner at Brown Goldstein & Levy LLP: whether it's the right for kids with disabilities to get an education without fear of getting ill, or the right of a gay man working at a Catholic charity to have his husband's insurance covered, which earned her a spot among **Law360's Titans of the Plaintiffs Bar** for 2023.

Hill was on the team that led a charge to obtain a Virginia federal court settlement in December finding that peer masking for students who go to class with students with disabilities is allowed. Hill represented 12 children with disabilities ranging from asthma to cystic fibrosis, which put them at risk of not only getting COVID-19, but put them at greater risk of having serious health consequences if they did get it, she said.

That case stemmed from Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's executive order ending school mask mandates.

"I immediately got calls from parents saying what am I going to do, my kid is ... supposed to be going back to school, they've been masking this time, and now all of a sudden he's gonna be back out of school away from his peers, and there's no real mechanism for online learning anymore," she said.

"I was really touched by the calls I got from parents and felt really that we had to go ahead and challenge this, and so we did," she said.

Hill said the commonwealth fought the case vehemently, and said for Virginia it was a political platform. But for her, she said the plaintiffs' case was about individual kids who need to have their peers masked.

"I've been a disability rights attorney for 30 years, approximately, and so it was within what I do, and it was such an important issue, really a life or death issue, and education versus no education issue for these kids, so it felt really important to me, it felt like something that I was capable of doing," she said.

In another case, Hill represented a data analyst in a case where a Maryland federal judge in August **granted him a partial victory** on claims that Catholic Relief Services violated federal and state laws when it canceled his husband's health insurance because the marriage violates Catholic values, ruling that religious organizations are not excused from anti-discrimination statutes.

There, she said there was an issue of what extent the church should be exempt from hiring LGBTQI people in the first place.

"But that's not our issue, it's not a political case, this case is about how unfair is it for an organization to hire people who are LGBTQI, and then not pay them like their peers [and] in this case not provide them benefits that their peers get," she said.

Like many attorneys, she said a motivation behind her practice is just enjoying winning, but that the best part of her day-to-day work is her clients.

"I want to be friends with them," Hill said. "They're so great, they're so dedicated, they're doing these cases for all the right reasons. They stick with it even when it's hard."

In November, she began representing 14 homeless veterans claiming the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is violating federal disability discrimination laws as nearly 3,500 veterans remain unhoused in Los Angeles. That suit remains ongoing.

Additionally, she represented a suit on behalf of blind voters who say that the absentee ballot system in Alabama flouts federal disability rights law. That case was dismissed, but without prejudice, meaning it can be refiled.

Mark Riccobono, the President of the National Federation of the Blind, a plaintiff in that case, said "Eve Hill is not blind, but our cause is deeply embedded in her warm and courageous heart, and over the decades she has taken her place among our fiercest and most effective advocates."

"Her groundbreaking work for blind voters, blind people who are incarcerated, blind students, and more has made her a legend, and many of her achievements benefit people with disabilities beyond the blind community," Riccobono said.

Hill said she came to where she is today because the Americans with Disabilities Act was written into law around the same time she decided to become a mediator. So she said she got into disability rights "out of luck" because the U.S. Department of Justice wanted an ADA mediation program.

"So basically I was doing what I loved in my free time and that made me qualified to do what I loved for work," she said.

However, she said she always wanted to get into civil rights law.

"Because my favorite emotion is righteous indignation ... injustice makes me mad," she said. "And civil rights law is one of the places where you can actually do something about being angry about injustice."

--Editing by Alex Hubbard.

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