

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

REGINA CIOLEK,)
[FILED UNDER SEAL])
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
 v.) Civil Action No.
)
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH)
 AND HUMAN SERVICES,)
 200 Independence Avenue SW)
 Washington, DC 20201,)
)
 Defendant.)
)

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Regina Ciolek brings this action against Defendant U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to compel compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (“FOIA”). As grounds therefor, Plaintiff alleges as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
2. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e).

PARTIES

3. Plaintiff Regina Ciolek is a former employee of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, a grantee of the National Institutes of Health (“NIH”), where she worked as a patent attorney protecting NIH research, developments, and patents.

4. Defendant U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) is an agency of the U.S. Government headquartered at 200 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20201.

NIH, a component of HHS, has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

5. On April 16, 2025, Plaintiff sent a FOIA request to NIH, seeking access to the following:

Copies of all records in NIH's possession related to a workplace incident that occurred between December 2016 and present, where [Plaintiff] was the victim. Specifically, [Plaintiff] seek[s]:

1. **Any NIH reports, internal investigations, complaints, or communications (emails, memos, or reports) regarding this incident involving Sahand Hormoz, Nir Hacohen, and Cori Hale.**
2. **Records of any disciplinary actions or safety measures taken as a result of the incident.**
3. **Security reports or footage logs from NIH security personnel and/or Broad Institute personnel if they exist.**
4. **Records and/or images, in any way relating to trafficked non-consensual pornography of the victim, [Plaintiff].**

The time frame of the request was identified as “between December 2016 and the present.”

6. NIH confirmed receipt of the request on April 16, 2025, and advised Plaintiff that the request had been assigned No. 639000.

7. As of the date of this Complaint, NIH has failed to: (i) determine whether to comply with the request; (ii) notify Plaintiff of any such determination or the reasons therefor; (iii) advise Plaintiff of the right to appeal any adverse determination; or (iv) produce the requested records or otherwise demonstrate that the requested records are exempt from production.

COUNT I
(Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552)

8. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 7 as if fully stated herein.
9. Defendant is in violation of FOIA.
10. Plaintiff is being irreparably harmed by reason of Defendant's violation of FOIA, and Plaintiff will continue to be irreparably harmed unless Defendant is compelled to comply with the law.
11. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.
12. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to issue a final determination on Plaintiff's request by May 14, 2025, at the latest. Because no final determination on Plaintiff's request within the time limits set by FOIA, Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted her administrative appeal remedies.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to conduct searches for any and all records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and a *Vaughn* index of any responsive records withheld under claim of exemption; (3) enjoin Defendant from continuing to withhold any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request; (4) grant Plaintiff an award of attorneys' fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E); and (5) grant Plaintiff such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: August 21, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Christina Bobb
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