



**Tina D'Orazio**  
Senior Vice President & Chief of Staff

### **PHILADELPHIA EAGLES**

#### **Executive Summary/Synopsis**

Climbing the corporate ladder is a feat in any industry. In the entertainment field, it's even harder to do. As a female, it can seem nearly impossible. Each choice, each decision a woman makes professionally will be scrutinized and criticized. When a woman makes a personal choice that runs parallel to her employment, life becomes complicated. And when a female supervisor is tasked with guiding an employee through this challenge, it can wreak havoc on employment security for both women.

During the prime years of a bombastically popular entertainment company, a supervisor was faced with the unexpected news that a new permanent hire was pregnant. This announcement came on the heels of the employee converting from a temporary position into a permanent full-time role. Due to federal regulations in the United States, it is illegal to terminate a female employee over a pregnancy. At this particular company however, the supervisor was encouraged to follow through with a firing, even at the risk of a possible lawsuit. Due to the immense pressure the supervisor was feeling from executives, she had to decide if keeping the employee on payroll could result in her own termination.

#### **Background**

Tina D'Orazio currently serves as Chief of Staff and Senior Vice President for the Philadelphia Eagles, a professional football team in the National Football League. Her tenure at the organization began in 2004 when she was hired as the Executive Assistant to the Chairman/CEO. Over the last 20 years, Tina has held various positions, working her way up to the role she now holds. Understanding the intense responsibilities that come with a heavy career trajectory, Tina has come to terms with being a working mother and the need to depend on others in her personal life.

Prior to joining the Eagles, Tina worked for a large entertainment company. This parent company has multiple entities ranging from music video production, music and media awards shows, magazines and a division supporting celebrity-level individuals and their personal needs.

Knowing she wanted to be part of the entertainment world at a professional level, Tina attended Syracuse University specifically for the school's strong communications curriculum and the positive reputation garnered onto graduates of the program. A native of the Philadelphia area, Tina was raised in the Roman Catholic faith and attended Catholic schools before college.



### Case (Problem)

As a supervisor at an entertainment company, Tina had been impressed with the performance of “Kate,” one of her temporary employees who worked as a personal assistant to a high-net worth client. Because of the close working relationship between a client and their assistant, it was not unusual to hire staff on a 90-day trial before offering the position permanently. Commonly referred to as “temp-to-perm,” Tina was happy to offer Kate the official role. Kate had been working diligently and proved to be a valuable asset to the company as one of their personal assistants to a well-known celebrity. Excited about the opportunity, Kate accepted the offer. However, a few days after Kate signed her employment contract for her permanent role, she informed Tina that she was pregnant.

Faced with Kate’s sudden pregnancy news, Tina was taken aback by the announcement. She was concerned about the impact of Kate’s pregnancy on the celebrity she supported, as well as the company’s productivity. Additionally, as Kate’s supervisor, Tina was concerned about how to manage the situation and ensure that Kate received the support she needed while maintaining her duties within the role. Kate revealed she was 11 weeks pregnant, a marker that was earlier than average when women shared pregnancy announcements; most women tend to wait until they have cleared certain risks and are well into their second trimester to make pregnancy news public.

As a working mother herself, Tina was unsure how to proceed. She wanted to be fair to Kate and support her during her pregnancy, but she also had to consider the company’s reaction as a whole to this news. Challenges could arise from having a pregnant woman in a physically demanding position. Often times, a personal assistant will work almost exclusively around the clock and must be available and accessible not only during the regular workday, but also on nights and weekends. A true 24/7, 365 day per year job, these positions are demanding, excessive and difficult to be structured.

In addition, Tina was well-versed in the legalities of firing a female employee simply because she is pregnant; it is illegal in the United States to do so. Legally, the company could not rescind the employment offer. If they did, it would open the door to a lawsuit that the company would not win. Making matters worse, Tina’s supervisor and the other executives above her own role were male. They did not have the same views on this matter and strongly pushed for Kate’s termination, no matter what the fallout would look like.

Tina faced an extremely difficult situation. As a successful working mother herself, Tina felt it was morally wrong to fire a pregnant employee, especially one who was doing a good job with her duties. Tina wanted to fight for Kate to remain employed, even if there would be a short period of uncertainty in the coming months. Legally, Tina also knew that a wrongful termination would result in a loss for the company, and her own professional reputation would be harmed.

***Should Tina terminate Kate simply because her own boss was forcing her hand? Or should Tina go against her boss, disappoint an important client, and put her own role at risk??***

### Conclusion

Ultimately, Tina refused to terminate “Kate.” She also assured Kate that her pregnancy would not affect the job offer and that the company would support her throughout her pregnancy. Tina’s decision to support Kate demonstrated empathy and fostered a trust among employees, especially female staff. Kate continued to excel at her new role for the duration of her pregnancy with minimal disruption. Kate felt valued and supported, and returned to work after her maternity leave, seamlessly handling the demands of her job with becoming a new mother.

Tina's decision to stand up to the male team of superiors serves as an example of effective management in the face of unexpected challenges. She leaned on her own sense of ethics and stated that female instinct helped guide her in the decision-making process. Tina chose to withhold the legal standards already put into place by the state, while simultaneously underscoring the importance of creating a work culture that values pregnant employees.

Today, Tina is grateful to be with the Philadelphia Eagles, an organization that empowers and promotes women in business.

