

# NEW YORK POST

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## Eye doctor fired me for breast cancer: suit

By KIERAN CROWLEY

A Long Island woman says she was fired by a Lens Crafters eye doctor because she got breast cancer, had to miss some work for chemotherapy sessions and was going to lose her hair.

"They just terminated her" because of her illness and because "her appearance" changed due to the cancer, said lawyer Leonard Leeds.

Leeds said his client, Lynda Sabatelli, 26, of Smithtown, has been "devastated" emotionally and financially by the firing.

Sabatelli said her boss Dr. Brian Berliner, "did not want somebody who was not pretty and had no hair dealing with the patients."

Leeds filed what is expected to become a multimillion-dollar discrimination lawsuit against Berliner and Lens Crafters.

According to Leeds, Sabatelli was hired by Berliner in September 2006 to work as an optometric technician in Berliner's Walt Whitman Mall location in Huntington Station.

In February, Sabatelli told her

supervisor that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had to undergo a double mastectomy.

Initially, Berliner was supportive and even told Sabatelli that "if you need a shoulder to cry on, you have my numbers and know where to reach me," according to the discrimination complaint.

But after Sabatelli's surgery, when she began to miss work due to chemo treatments and resulting sickness, she was demoted to a part-time job, Leeds said

She was eventually moved to another job location, and when she complained in April, she was fired on the spot, depriving her of desperately needed health insurance, Leeds said.

"How am I going to pay my bills?" Sabatelli said.

"I have a hard time getting up in the morning and looking at myself in the mirror, and now I have to get up and look for a job. But who's going to hire me?"

Berliner could be reached for comment yesterday.

kieran.crowley@nypost.com