

Litigator Marlén Cortez Morris Joins Barnes & Thornburg in Chicago

Barnes & Thornburg has added Marlén Cortez Morris as a partner in the Litigation Department. Cortez Morris, who was previously at Cheng Cohen LLC, is the ninth partner to join the firm's Chicago office in 2018.

The firm said Cortez Morris represents and advises clients on franchise, labor and employment, and commercial litigation matters in courts and alternative dispute resolution venues, and before government agencies across the country. She litigates complex matters from inception through appeal. Her deep litigation experience includes the enforcement of contract and intellectual property rights, as well as the defense of claims for breach of contract, business torts, violations of franchise registration and relationship laws, state consumer protection violations, and vicarious and joint employment liability.

On the labor and employment side, she defends franchisors and employers against wage and hour class and collective actions and claims for wrongful termination, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation arising under federal, state and local laws. In addition, she has enforced non-competes, litigated unemployment compensation benefits claims up to appeal, and represented management in traditional labor disputes. Cortez Morris also works with complex compliance strategies and best practices for litigation prevention.

"Marlén is a great addition to our team," said William McErlean, chair of Barnes & Thornburg's Litigation Department. "From successfully representing franchisors in litigation, arbitration, and regulatory matters to advising franchisors on

unique employment issues in that industry, Marlén's diverse experience will be invaluable to clients who become embroiled in these complex issues."

Cortez Morris is a member of the American Bar Association's Forum on Franchising and Section of Labor and Employment Law, the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, the Hispanic National Bar Association, and the International Franchise Association (IFA). She serves on the IFA's Diversity Institute Board, frequently speaks and writes on employment and franchise law topics, and is an editor of the ABA's Franchise Law Journal.

Mark Rust, managing partner of Barnes & Thornburg's Chicago office, added: "The genuine care that Marlén exhibits toward her clients and the sterling reputation she has earned in the local legal community make her a terrific addition to our growing office. We're thrilled to have her on board."

Cortez Morris earned her J.D., cum laude, from the University of Illinois College of Law, where she was an associate editor of the University of Illinois Law Review and received the Rickert Award for Excellence in Advocacy, and her B.S., with honors, magna cum laude, from the University of Tampa.