



McDonogh School in Owings Mills was founded on Nov. 21, 1873. (File photo)

McDonogh School alum files sexual abuse lawsuit using MD Child Victims Act

Madeleine O'Neill // April 17, 2024 // 4Minute Read

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A McDonogh School alumnus who attended the Owings Mills boarding school in the 1980s has filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging he was sexually abused by a former dean of students there.

The dean of students named in the lawsuit, Alvin J. Levy, died in 1993 as he was facing sexual abuse charges in Baltimore County. An investigation by McDonogh School concluded in 2019 that Levy and another former faculty member may have abused 19 male students over several decades.

The plaintiff in the new lawsuit is Delta, Pennsylvania, resident Dennis Wedekind Jr., who attended the boarding school from 1980 to 1984, according to the complaint.

He brought the suit against McDonogh School with help from Maryland's Child Victims Act, a 2023 law that allowed childhood sexual abuse survivors to sue perpetrators and the institutions accused of protecting them at any time, no matter how long ago the abuse happened. The CVA eliminated the statute of limitations for such claims in the future, too.

Wedekind's lawsuit claims McDonogh's board and administration knew about Levy's conduct before 1980 but took no action to remove him.

"McDonogh's collective silence and inaction enabled Dean Levy's horrific conduct to continue," Wedekind's lawyer, Ari S. Casper, wrote in the complaint. "Starting in 1980, plaintiff became the next involuntary recipient of Levy's abuse and exploitation."

According to the complaint, Levy abused Wedekind on multiple occasions over several years at locations including the Dean of Students' office, Wedekind's dorm room and other school facilities. Levy also threatened Wedekind with expulsion and used other intimidation tactics to keep him vulnerable to the abuse, the complaint alleges.

Brooke
Blumberg, McDonogh's director of marketing and communications, said the school is aware of the lawsuit.

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"McDonogh remains committed to fostering a community where students and adults feel comfortable identifying and reporting sexual abuse," she said. "We take all allegations of sexual abuse very seriously and remain steadfast in our support for survivors while complying with all applicable laws."

Levy was indicted on sexual abuse charges in 1992 and died before the case concluded. McDonogh announced in 2016 that it would conduct an external investigation into Levy's behavior after a former student told school officials he had been assaulted by Levy.

The investigation found that Levy and another ex-faculty member, who is also deceased, may have abused 19 male students over several decades. In Levy's case, the abuse persisted from the 1940s through the 1980s, according to Wedekind's complaint.

Some of the allegations were reported to school officials at the time, the report found, but did not lead to action.

"McDonogh School turned a blind eye as its Dean of Students sexually abused minors who went there," Casper said. "This lawsuit will bring that abuse to light and seeks the justice my client has been awaiting for decades."

Defendants being sued under the Child Victims Act are challenging the law's constitutionality in multiple jurisdictions. Opponents of the law have long argued that it is unconstitutional to retroactively remove a statute of limitations.

Maryland lawmakers also inserted a "statute of repose," a little-known legal mechanism that creates a hard cutoff for future claims, in 2017 legislation that extended the statute of limitations for future childhood sexual abuse lawsuits.

Legislators later said they did not realize they had added a statute of repose, which is more typically seen in construction to give builders and property owners certainty about their future liability. The issue could create another legal obstacle as the Child Victims Act makes its way through the courts.

A Prince George's County judge found the law constitutional last month, sparking an appeal from the Archdiocese of Washington. A judge in Montgomery County dismissed a lawsuit brought under the act earlier this month, finding that the CVA is unconstitutional.

The issue is expected to be decided by the Maryland Supreme Court.

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יום שישי, 14 ביוני

05:00

09:00

18:00

יום שני, 17 ביוני

09:00

09:00

יום שלישי, 18 ביוני

10:00

יום רביעי, 19 ביוני

15:00

יום חמישי, 20 ביוני

12:00

יום שישי, 21 ביוני

13:00

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