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GVI Hit With 19-Count Civil Suit Alleging Failure to Stop CAHS Coach's Abuse Despite Repeated Warnings

The lawsuit, filed by a former student under a pseudonym, details years of abuse by coach Alfredo Bruce Smith and accuses school officials, DHS, and VIDE of creating a hostile environment and failing to act on multiple reports of misconduct

Government / **Published On December 24, 2024 06:46 AM /**

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The Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas, USVI.

On Monday, a civil complaint was filed against the Government of the Virgin Islands alleging nineteen counts including state-created danger, conspiracy, equal protection violations, Title 9 violations, negligence and more. The lawsuit centers around the sexual abuse of children by former Charlotte Amalie High School coach [Alfredo Bruce Smith](#), and the lack of action from

several school officials and government agencies even when reports of Smith's wrongdoing began to come to light.

The complaint was filed by Cevallos & Wong, a New York law firm, on behalf of an anonymous plaintiff who is asking that the court allow the trial to proceed under a pseudonym. “John Doe”, as the male plaintiff is identified in the documents, was a minor child attending CAHS in 2019, when he was first sexually assaulted by Smith.

Prior to then, reports of Smith's sexual crimes against the students of CAHS had been heard by school and government officials for years, the lawsuit alleges. Those who knew “failed to properly respond or respond at all,” the complaint argues.

The new lawsuit recounts many of the facts uncovered at Smith's trial and in his eventual plea bargain, that his predation against CAHS students started as soon as he was hired in 2006; that the events for which he was tried began in 2015; that Smith used school property and his position of authority to perpetrate and record his crimes against the children of CAHS, and that he used violence and coercion to gain the compliance of his victims.

“At all times relevant hereto, Defendants knew Smith was dangerous,” the lawsuit alleges, naming former principal Alcede Edwards, CAHS teacher Camelia Febres, and up to 20 “Richard Roes” as defendants. The unnamed individuals are yet-to-be identified “school officials, board members, teachers, coaches, social workers, administrators or other employees” of various government departments “who knew or should have known of Smith's abuse,” and who either had an obligation to report or stop the abuse but failed to do so, the lawsuit says. These unnamed defendants, as well as Mr. Edwards and Ms. Febres, were mandated reporters at the time of Smith's crimes against the children of CAHS, the complaint alleges.

According to the lawsuit, Smith first assaulted John Doe in early 2019, when the CAHS track team was practicing on the Ivanna Eudora Keane High School track. “At this practice, Smith choked Plaintiff in full view of other school officials, coaches, and agents of Defendants,” the complaint says. Smith also allegedly threatened the boy and made lewd remarks of a sexual nature to him – also, according to the complaint, within the hearing of other school officials. At that track practice, Smith first outlined “what he was going to do to Plaintiff” during an upcoming track meet in Puerto Rico, including allegedly making the boy stay in Smith's dorm room while at the meet.

After this first incident, the high school coach also allegedly took the boy off campus and tried to “force, threaten and coerce Plaintiff into Smith's home and into Smith's bedroom.” The student managed to escape, hiding in a school van, the lawsuit states.

Smith also allegedly assaulted the boy a third time, mere days before the trip to Puerto Rico. With the student nursing an injured hip, Smith reportedly ordered the boy to submit to a leg massage in the back of the school van while the team was at practice on St. Thomas. The massage, according to the complaint, was but flimsy pretext for a forcible sexual assault.

In Puerto Rico, Smith assaulted the boy again, the lawsuit claims. Prior to the trip, the boy and his parents attended a meeting where he told school officials that “he did not feel safe or comfortable being forced to stay in the same dorm room as Smith.” In response Smith, who was also at the meeting, became “visibly angry,” while other school officials in attendance, including Ms. Febres, “did nothing to stop Smith's intimidation of the Plaintiff,” the lawsuit alleges. These details match the narrative [told to the Consortium during an interview](#) with the parent of one of the boys Mr.

Smith assaulted.

“Defendants and attendees at the meeting knew Plaintiff was in danger but no actions were taken.” Because the boy and his parents were not expending money for the trip, they could not “call the shots,” the family was reportedly told.

“Defendants knew that Smith would likely abuse children on the track trip,” the lawsuit argues.

After the trip to Puerto Rico, Smith reportedly called the boy via a social media messaging platform and warned him not to tell anybody the details of the assault that had allegedly taken place.

Even after the boy's mother reported the suspected abuse to school officials and the Department of Human Services, no steps were taken to initiate credible investigations into the matter. It was only when the child's mother took her concerns to Homeland Security Investigations that federal authorities began to probe the matter. As a result of their investigation, Smith was arrested in September 2021 and ultimately pleaded guilty to a 20-count indictment on federal and territorial child sexual exploitation offenses. He is currently serving a 35-year sentence, which will be followed by a lifetime of supervised release.

“Defendants deliberately turned a blind eye” to Smith's abuse of minor students, despite having “actual and constructive evidence” of Smith's crimes against children from before John Doe was ever assaulted, the lawsuit argues. “School officials...were notified multiple times that Bruce was touching and behaving inappropriately with students, but he was able to continue raping children for years before federal investigators acted on a report and finally put a stop to his crimes,” the complaint states.

These “school officials”, apart from the individuals named earlier, also include the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Board of Education, and the Government of the Virgin Islands, all named as defendants in the lawsuit.

The complaint also notes the systemic failures in policies and procedures surrounding the reporting of child abuse, as captured in a report prepared by the John Praed Foundation. The lawsuit alleges that those failures ultimately lie at the feet of the Departments of Education and Human Services, which together created an environment where the reporting of child sexual abuse was actively discouraged.

The complaint alleges that VIDE, BOE, VIDHS and GVI itself are guilty of several Title IX violations, including harassment, creating a hostile environment, deliberate indifference, failure to train, and retaliation. The complaint also accuses all defendants of violating his rights to bodily integrity and equal protection. The plaintiff suffered from a state-created danger, and defendants entered into a conspiracy to do so, the complaint says. The school trip to Puerto Rico also violated the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, the lawsuit alleges. Charges of civil assault, civil battery, negligence, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and reckless infliction of emotional distress were also filed against all defendants.

The lawsuit is seeking a jury trial of the facts, with damages to be awarded for pain and suffering and past and future mental health treatment. Punitive and compensatory damages are also being sought, among other relief being requested.

There has not yet been a response from defendants.

