



**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Martin Ramey, Rhine Law Firm

Mobile: 909-974-8126

Mary Charles Amerson, The Lea/Schultz Law Firm

Mobile: 910-515-5634

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**MORE KELLY VICTIMS SUE NEW HANOVER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

*Three Former Students of Isaac Bear Early College High School Come Forward*

WILMINGTON, NC – The law firms which previously sued the New Hanover County Board of Education filed another suit today in the Superior Court of New Hanover County on behalf of three new John Doe Plaintiffs for injuries they suffered as a result of the sexual abuse of Michael Earl Kelly. These new victims were not involved in the first litigation which ended with a settlement made possible by the Board’s insurer for \$5.75 million and which called for a number of programmatic changes within the school system.

“As we told the Board’s attorneys, there are additional victims of Mike Kelly who are still out there and within their statute of limitations,” says Mary Charles Amerson, an attorney with The Lea/Schultz Law Firm, P.C. “The heinous acts of this man knew no bounds and the continued failures of this district allowed this to occur,” adds Martin Ramey, of the Rhine Law Firm, P.C.

“I have seen this happen in a lot of other cases where the offender molested numerous victims over a long time, and many of the victims came forward later, only after they felt sure that they would be believed,” said Julie Medlin, Ph.D., one of the expert witnesses retained by the Plaintiffs in the *John Does 1-14 v. New Hanover County Board of Education* lawsuit filed in 2019.

Referring to themselves as John Does 15 through 17, these three young men were all former students at Isaac Bear at some point after a principal conducted interviews with several parents

and many other former students about Kelly's inappropriate conduct in 2010. "Had she done what she should have done, Kelly would have been fired and reported to law enforcement. He would never have met these young men," Amerson notes.

"One of the more striking features of this lawsuit was Kelly's affinity for pornography and his constant pressure to expose these students to pornography and other illicit material, which can have serious adverse impacts on an adolescent's development and even the physical structure and function of their brain," states Ramey. "He stole their innocence and exploited their vulnerabilities for his own prurient interest and gratification."

Amerson notes that although a settlement was reached with the school board back in June, that nothing in the settlement agreement prevents these young men from suing the school for what happened to them. "We expect to fight just as hard in this litigation as we did in the first and will continue to fight until this school district eradicates the problem of educator-student sexual abuse. This does not belong in a classroom."

"It takes a lot for a victim-survivor of childhood sexual abuse to come out of the shadows. It takes not only courage but a tremendous amount of bravery," adds Ramey. "The only way to break the power that child predators have over children is through suits like this. And, the only way to change our schools' handling of similar complaints is through the court system."

Amerson says that the work performed and the documents exchanged in the first lawsuit will be extremely helpful to this case, and she plans to file a motion with the court to use the deposition testimony and over 80,000 pages of documents spanning 25 years in this case. No trial date has been set in the case and is not expected for some time. Although the Board had not yet been served, their general counsel has been provided with a copy of the lawsuit filed today.

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There are resources available to those who have been affected by sexual assault, including:

- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#), tel.: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673). This group connects victims of sexual assaults to sexual assault service providers in their community.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#), tel.: 1-800-273-8255. This group provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources.
- [Coastal Horizons Rape Crisis Center](#), tel. 910-392-7460. Serving New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender Counties, the Rape Crisis Center staff, interns, and volunteers provide **free and confidential** services to all victims of sexual violence.