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NEWS

'A Sinking Ship': Class Action Filed Against Stone Academy Amid Probe

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Litigation Reporter

A class action has been filed against the former for-profit nursing school, Stone Academy, after it abruptly closed its door on Feb. 14. The lawsuit alleged officials knew the school was not viable, but continued to enroll students.

According to the complaint, the defendants, Career Training Specialists LLC, doing business as Stone Academy), Mark Scheinberg, Joseph Bierbaum, Gary Evans and Richard Scheinberg as trustee for Creative Career Trust, "sold the class members a ticket to a sinking ship."

The for-profit school, owned and operated by the Scheinberg family, marketed itself as a reputable nursing school, but the defendants

allegedly knew they were not providing accredited courses and clinical experience to the students, the complaint said.

Stone Academy did not immediately respond for comment.

The proposed class includes anyone who was enrolled in the nursing programs between 2018 and Feb. 14, 2023, or from Nov. 21, 2021 to Feb 14., 2023 who graduated from the programs.

The complaint said Stone Academy's closure "upended the lives of hundreds of enrolled practical nursing students who paid tens-of-thousands of dollars to pursue their degrees to become licensed practical nurses."

In addition, many who graduated are now required to retake clinical courses to continue their work as Licensed Practical Nurses, the complaint alleged.

Counsel for the plaintiffs, David A. Slossberg of Hurwitz, Sargarin, Slossberg & Knuff, said they have a "very robust" Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act claim against Stone Academy, and the evidence from the plaintiffs and public records is already very strong.

"We think that the class is going to number over 1,000," Slossberg said. "We're talking about predominately working women, many of whom are already in the healthcare field, ... while they're juggling family, kids and everything else. They enroll in this program thinking it's a suitable and viable program and they're going to get a degree, and then without any notice, [Stone Academy] just closed its doors."

Slossberg said the monetary impact is “extraordinary”, and the plaintiffs need relief while they “navigate through this mess.”

“This is a role where lawyers can help,” Slossberg said. “We brought this as a class action because if any one of these injured persons wanted to do this on their own you know, how could you how could they possibly do that and fight Stone Academy? When you bring it as a class action, you really are able to provide all of the members of the class some opportunity for relief.”

While this lawsuit is pending, Attorney General William Tong also began an investigation into Stone Academy shortly after its closure on Feb. 23.

Tong served Bierbaum and Richard Scheinberg with civil investigative demands for information including their financial and legal interests and responsibilities at Stone Academy, school records, and efforts they took to comply with Connecticut Law.

The attorney general sought information on their “awareness or involvement in efforts to allow non-clinical assignments to count toward clinical instruction hours at Stone, efforts to ensure adequate student faculty ratios, efforts to ensure the accuracy of student transcripts, among other questions,” a press release said.

Neither Bierbaum and Scheinberg responded or acknowledged the demand by the March 29 deadline, leading Tong to seek a court order for compliance, Tong’s said.

“Stone took in millions of dollars in tuition from students who spent countless hours away from their families and jobs to become nurses and advance their careers,” Tong said in a press release. “Stone utterly failed

them. What has happened to these students is a tragedy and I am beyond outraged on their behalf. We are bringing everything we've got to this investigation, and we are going to get to the bottom of this. If our office finds any wrongdoing, I will not hesitate to hold those responsible to the fullest extent of the law."