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11
12 *in pro per*

13 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
14 FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA
15

16 Kimberly R. Sweidy,
17 Plaintiff,

18 v.

19 Spring Ridge Academy, an Arizona
corporation, Jean Courtney,
20 Suzanne Courtney, Brandon Courtney,
Erin Smith, Leslie Filsinger,
21 Justin Zych, Kate Deily,
Veronica Borges, and
22 Does 1 through 20

23 Defendants.
24

Case No. CV-21-08013-PCT-SPL

**DECLARATION OF
TROY D. WILLIAMS**

25 I, Troy D. Williams, under penalty of perjury, hereby declare that I am the father of a
26 former Spring Ridge Academy (“SRA”) student. If called upon to testify as a witness, I
27 would and could competently testify, under penalty of perjury, to the following facts:

28 ///

1. I am Troy D. Williams. Our daughter attended SRA from October 2017–December 2018.

2. My wife and I utilized an Educational Consultant, Hall Educational Consulting Inc., who we paid \$6,500. The educational consultant originally pushed several wilderness programs because they said that most residential programs would only take students who had attended a wilderness program first. Given that it was winter, we refused to send our daughter to a wilderness program. The consultant ultimately recommended two programs that were willing to take students without wilderness and who had immediate availability. Given some of the seemingly extreme practices of the other program, and the “proven therapeutic methods” touted by SRA, it appeared to be a better choice at the time.

3. Within two months of her enrollment, our daughter became gravely ill, with fever, swelling, difficulty breathing, sloughing of all mucous-membrane areas, extreme fatigue, and inability to drink water. Despite serious and persistent symptoms, SRA staff did not seek medical attention for our daughter. She was described as being “dramatic” and “faking it.” They just kept telling her to drink more water.

4. It appears that the vast majority of SRA staff are unskilled, near-minimum wage employees with little or no training, education, or qualifications. They are the primary individuals who supervise the girls 24 hours/day, 7-days/week and are the only people present during nights and weekends.

5. During our daughter’s time at SRA, there was one nurse on staff for no more than 40 hours in a week, and usually not on-site for evenings, nights, or weekends. That is a maximum of 40 hours out of 168 hours in a week (only 23.8% of the time) for 60 to 70 girls, many of whom are on some form of medication.

6. We were told that the nurse was on-call and available at all times of the nights and weekends, which would be logistically impractical for one person, but to make matters worse, the night and weekend staff were wholly unqualified to triage serious medical issues and would delay seeking medical help or calling the nurse.

1 7. Another student demanded that our daughter receive emergency services. For this
2 “act of defiance,” she was punished.

3 8. Our daughter was taken to Yavapai Regional Medical Center, where her illness
4 was too severe to be treated.

5 9. She was then taken to Honor Health, where her illness was too severe to be treated.

6 10. She was then finally taken to Phoenix Children’s Hospital, where we were told that
7 her mucus membranes were sluffing off. She had to be treated as though it were a burn.
8 She spent several nights at Phoenix Children’s Hospital.

9 11. I wanted to remove our daughter from SRA based on this horrible experience.

10 12. Upon expressing our deep concerns and reservations about the incompetence of
11 the staff and limited access to medical treatment, Leslie Filsinger, the SRA Clinical
12 Director, told me that our experience is highly unusual and that medical assistance is
13 typically more readily available. Further, she warned us about the negative psychological
14 and developmental impact pulling our daughter would have on her progress.

15 13. Based on the fear instilled in me by Leslie Filsinger, I did not remove our daughter
16 from SRA.

17 14. Our daughter received “therapy” once a week.

18 15. Our daughter received “group therapy” without a counselor.

19 16. My wife and I attended Parent Challenge Workshop. Our daughter attended Teen
20 Challenge Workshop.

21 17. Parent Challenge Workshop included disturbing, unorthodox methods like group
22 humiliation and peer pressure to encourage parents to publicly disclose personal traumas
23 that were unrelated to the treatment of our daughter. I did not understand the merits of
24 these methods but was led to believe that if I didn't fully participate, it would slow my
25 daughter’s progress and that SRA wouldn’t allow her to progress to the next stage in the
26 program. I was told that our daughter was going through a similar “Challenge” program.

27 18. My wife and I also attended the Action Workshop. This workshop included more
28 group humiliation tactics and peer pressure, but also included very strange rituals, like

1 being held and rocked (like a baby) by a group of other parents while music played. At
2 the culmination of this workshop, we were led into a candle-lit room with blindfolds and
3 directed to a seat. Then, with blindfolds still on, our feet and hands were rubbed with
4 lotion by a stranger (I still don't know who did it). We were led to believe that these were
5 proven methods of treatment, but they seemed cultish to me. At every attempt to ask
6 about the validity, I was confronted with the comments that I need to be more accepting
7 and open so that I can help my daughter's success. I was also told that our daughter was
8 going through a similar "Action" program.

9 19. Our entire family was strongly encouraged to attend "Family Therapy," including
10 my wife, Lauren, and three of Lauren's sisters. I was deeply disturbed that our family's
11 session was led by Brandon, who to my knowledge has no professional degrees in
12 psychology or psychiatry. He attempted to have us tell the other members of the family
13 the things that they were doing that were getting in the way of Lauren's progress. My
14 daughters felt very uncomfortable discussing their concerns with Brandon. However,
15 once again, any time that I would challenge the process or methods, I was told that I was
16 undermining my daughter's progress.

17 20. In Q4 of 2018, our daughter was required to complete a program called
18 "Commitment" as a prerequisite for graduation. As part of this program, our daughter
19 was forced to carry a five pound bag of sand or rice everywhere she went for weeks. Our
20 daughter is very petite. She complained to the administrators that it was hurting her back
21 and arms but was always told to not complain and that "pushback was hurting her
22 progress." Moreover, she was paired with a peer for this program and was told that she
23 would be letting the peer down if she didn't complete the program. This program
24 culminated in her being driven at night with a blindfold to a remote location. She was left
25 alone in the dark at the end of a dirt/gravel road and was forced to walk with the bag by
26 herself for what felt like a mile. She was terrified.

27 21. Our daughter still has nightmares about the cruelty of the staff at SRA when they
28 ignored her cries for help during a medical emergency and accused her of being

1 manipulative. She still has nightmares about the unorthodox rituals in Challenge, Action,
2 and Commitment. She still has nightmares about being left alone at night on a deserted
3 road in the name of so-called therapy.

4 22. Our daughter is now in therapy and frequently discusses the trauma she sustained
5 at SRA.

6 23. Our daughter currently attends an interior design college in France.

7 Respectfully Submitted,

8
9 February 12, 2023

DocuSigned by:
Troy D. Williams
AB19AFC3913848A...
Troy D. Williams