

C.B. v Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of N.Y.

2023 NY Slip Op 34105(U)

November 16, 2023

Supreme Court, New York County

Docket Number: Index No. 950541/2021

Judge: Sabrina Kraus

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This opinion is uncorrected and not selected for official publication.

**SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
NEW YORK COUNTY**

PRESENT: HON. SABRINA KRAUS PART 57TR

Justice

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C.B.,

Plaintiff,

- v -

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK, ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK, LINCOLN HALL BOYS' HAVEN, THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS, DISTRICT OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA, INC

Defendant.

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INDEX NO. 950541/2021

MOTION DATE 11/08/2023

MOTION SEQ. NO. 002

DECISION + ORDER ON MOTION

The following e-filed documents, listed by NYSCEF document number (Motion 002) 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39

were read on this motion to/for DISMISSAL.

BACKGROUND

Plaintiff initiated the instant action pursuant to the New York Child Victims Act (“CVA”). The Complaint alleges that on multiple occasions in the 1970’s when Plaintiff was a minor, Plaintiff was sexually assaulted by Brother Edward. The alleged sexual assaults perpetrated by Brother Edward occurred in the living quarters located at Lincoln Hall Boys’ Haven (hereinafter “Lincoln Hall”). The alleged sexual assault perpetrated by Brother Edward against Plaintiff included anal penetration with Brother Edward’s penis. Plaintiff was directed by his social worker at Lincoln Hall, Mr. McCanley, to report to Brother Edward’s living quarters, where Brother Edward allegedly sexually assaulted Plaintiff.

Lincoln Hall appeared herein by counsel and filed an answer on October 20, 2021, but now asserts that recent appellate decisions warrant a dismissal of this action pursuant to CPLR §3211(a)(7).

For the reasons set forth below, the motion is denied.

DISCUSSION

In determining dismissal under CPLR Rule 3211 (a) (7), the “complaint is to be afforded a liberal construction” (*Goldfarb v Schwartz*, 26 AD3d 462, 463 [2d Dept 2006]). The “allegations are presumed to be true and accorded every favorable inference” (*Godfrey v Spano*, 13 NY3d 358, 373 [2009]). “[T]he sole criterion is whether the pleading states a cause of action, and if from its four corners factual allegations are discerned which taken together manifest any cause of action cognizable at law a motion for dismissal will fail” (*Guggenheimer v Ginzburg*, 43 NY2d 268, 275 [1977]). Additionally, “[w]hether a plaintiff can ultimately establish its allegations is not part of the calculus in determining a motion to dismiss” (*EBC I, Inc. v Goldman, Sachs & Co.*, 5 NY3d 11, 19 [2005]).

Movant further argues that recent decisions establish a heightened pleadings standard for cases of this type. *See, Moore Charitable Foundation v PJT Partners, Inc.*, 40 NY3d 150 (June 13, 2023); *Doe v. Hauppauge Union Free Sch. Dist.*, 213 A.D.3d 809 (2d Dept 2023); *Easterbrooks v. Schenectady Cnty.*, 218AD3d 969 (3d Dept. 2023).

The standard to sufficiently plead notice to survive a motion to dismiss pursuant to CPLR §3211(a)(7) in a cause of action involving negligent supervision or retention is well established and has been recently reiterated by both the First and Second Departments. *See e.g., J.D. v. The Archdiocese of New York*, 214 AD3d 561(1st Dept. 2023) and *Novak v. Diocese of Brooklyn, et al*, 210 A.D.3d 1104 (2022).

To survive a motion to dismiss pursuant to CPLR §3211(a)(7) in such a case, a plaintiff need only allege that an employer knew or should have known of its employee or agent's harmful propensities, that it failed to take necessary action, and that this failure caused damage to others. The cause of action does not need to be pleaded with specificity. *See Novak, supra; Kenneth R. v. Roman Cath. Diocese of Brooklyn*, 229 A.D.2d 159,162 (2d Dept 1997) *Belcastro v Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y.*, 213 AD3d 800, 801 [2d Dept 2023]).

The court disagrees with movant's assertion that *Moore* and *Easterbrooks* represents a change in the law in this regard.

“Here, at the pleading stage of the litigation where the plaintiff's allegations in the complaint are treated as true and are accorded the benefit of every possible favorable inference, the complaint is sufficiently pled as to the causes of action to recover damages for negligence, including the negligent hiring, retention, and supervision of the priest (see *Doe v Enlarged City Sch. Dist. of Middletown*, 195 AD3d at 596), and inadequate supervision of the plaintiff.”

Novak 210 AD3d at 1105.

The court further notes that *Moore* was not a 3211 decision but involved appellate review of a decision after trial, and that in *Doe v. Hauppauge Union Free Sch. Dist.*, the plaintiff was sexually abused by a teacher employed at Hauppauge High School, when the plaintiff was attending a party at the teacher's home – off school grounds. 213 A.D.3d 809 (2d Dept. 2023).

Similarly, in a recent decision from the Second Department issued after the *Moore Charitable Foundation* decision. In *Grabowski v. Orange County*, _ NY3d _, 2023 NY Slip Op 04580 (2d Dept., Sept. 13, 2023), the Court upheld New York's liberal pleading standard and found that the Plaintiff's CVA Complaint, “which asserted that the abuse was foreseeable, inter alia, because the County knew or in the exercise of reasonable case should have known of the foster father's propensity to engage in the sexual abuse of children, sufficiently alleged that the

