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## Pierce Bainbridge Ends Paralegal's Defamation Suit

By **Patrick Hoff**

Law360 (October 27, 2022, 3:05 PM EDT) -- Pierce Bainbridge struck a deal to end a lawsuit brought by a paralegal who accused a former partner of sexually assaulting her and then publicly smearing her during his own bitter post-termination legal battle with the law firm, according to a filing in New York federal court.



In an August 2020 complaint filed in New York federal court, paralegal Selina Kyle said she was sexually assaulted at Pierce Bainbridge's New York office in 2018. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer, File)

In a **stipulation of dismissal with prejudice** Wednesday, Pierce Bainbridge Beck Price & Hecht LLP, former partner Donald Lewis and Selina Kyle asked the court to toss all claims, counterclaims and cross claims filed in the two-year-old suit. Each party will pay their own attorney fees and costs, according to the filing.

Additional details about the end of the suit were not immediately available Thursday.

In an **August 2020 complaint**, Kyle said Lewis sexually assaulted her at Pierce Bainbridge's New York office in 2018. When she reported the incident to the firm, Pierce Bainbridge launched an investigation, found her claims to be substantiated and terminated Lewis, according to the suit.

Lewis, who claimed the sexual assault allegations were fabricated in order to prevent him from blowing the whistle on Pierce Bainbridge's sketchy financial dealings, then launched a campaign to discredit and intimidate Kyle amid **heated litigation** between himself and the firm, according to the complaint.

Kyle said throughout 2019 and 2020 she was continually drawn into the legal battle between Lewis and Pierce Bainbridge, and her attempts to extricate herself were unsuccessful. According to the complaint, she was left with no choice but to file claims against Lewis and the firm.

Lewis **attempted to disqualify** Wigdor LLP from representing Kyle in September 2020, claiming he had spoken at length with Wigdor attorney David Gottlieb when he was preparing to sue Pierce Bainbridge in 2019. However, U.S. District Judge Katherine Polk Failla **denied his request**, ruling the brief consultation wasn't enough to disqualify Wigdor.

Pierce Bainbridge nearly collapsed in early 2020 after losing more than 50 attorneys and most of its leadership as debt mounted. A firm spokesperson said in March 2020 that founder John Pierce had **taken a leave of absence** after an internal investigation found he'd taken out a personal loan using the firm's assets as collateral. But **Pierce told Law360** two months later that the real reason he'd stepped back was to seek treatment for substance abuse and other addictive behavior.

Pierce incorporated a new firm, Pierce Bainbridge PC, in the summer of 2020 but was still repeatedly sued by **various creditors** claiming Pierce and his firm collectively owed millions in unpaid loans and fees.

Lawrence Pearson, who is representing Kyle, said he couldn't comment on the stipulation of dismissal except that the parties reached a mutual resolution.

Representatives of Lewis and Pierce Bainbridge Beck Price & Hecht LLP did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Kyle is represented by Lawrence M. Pearson of Wigdor LLP.

Lewis is represented by Cynthia V. Fitzgerald of Fernandez Garcia LLC.

Pierce Bainbridge Beck Price & Hecht LLP is represented by Edward D. Altabet of Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman PC.

The case is Kyle v. Lewis et al., case number 1:20-cv-06142, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

--Additional reporting by Ryan Boysen. Editing by Neil Cohen.

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