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Courier Journal

Louisville, Kentucky

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2021 | COURIERJOURNAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Lawsuit: Teacher fired over pregnancy

Claims discrimination from Catholic leaders

Billy Kobin
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A former teacher at a local Catholic school claims in a new lawsuit the Archdiocese of Louisville fired her after she informed leaders that she and her boyfriend were expecting a child.

The suit argues the archdiocese's enforcement of its "Christian Witness policy" by terminating employees who engage in premarital sex discriminates against female employees, with several male employees also keeping jobs over the years despite violations of the policy.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court in recent years has granted exceptions to Catholic schools in relation to anti-discrimination laws and the rules their employees must follow, the new lawsuit argues the archdiocese is not exempt from the Kentucky Civil Rights Act's prohibition on gender discrimination.

Sarah Syring had taught middle school English classes at St. Andrew Academy, 7724 Columbine Drive in Pleasure Ridge Park, since 2019 before losing her job at the school this past January, according to her lawsuit filed last week in Jefferson Circuit Court.

The lawsuit names the Archdiocese of Louisville as the sole defendant.

Claims made in a lawsuit represent only one side of a case.

Archdiocesan spokeswoman Cecilia Price said the archdiocese cannot comment on pending litigation.

The lawsuit from Syring, 41, notes she has been "in a committed relationship" and lived with her boyfriend since 2019.

In August 2020, Syring discovered she was pregnant and, once comfortable with sharing the news, eventually met with St. Andrew Academy Principal Stuart Cripe that fall.

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Trust in LMPD is broken. Can this project fix it?



Protesters held up clenched fists in downtown Louisville in September 2020 as they awaited the Kentucky attorney general's announcement on whether officers would be charged in the shooting death of Breonna Taylor.

PHOTOS BY PAT MCDONOUGH/COURIER JOURNAL

Hope, doubts hang on city's Synergy initiative



Protesters yell at Louisville Metro Police officers during a confrontation on Liberty Street in June 2020.

Darcy Costello Louisville Courier Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

The slaying of Breonna Taylor and the heated protests that followed directed for months at Louisville Metro Police has built a chasm of distrust between many community members and officers.

The question is: How can the city rebuild that trust? Mayor Greg Fischer and other city leaders are betting a new city project will help provide the cure. Its critics, however, have called the project a "waste of time."

Fischer has put forward a budget proposal that would send the Synergy Project initiative \$675,000, funding that city officials and program leaders say is vital to repairing the broken relationship between citizens and LMPD.

That program, launched in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic and Taylor's death, brought together members of the police department and community for

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Local effort could help people relocate after gun violence

Emma Austin
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Cynthia Hall lost her son, granddaughter and home to gunfire.

All in a matter of two days. Hall, 53, said she no longer felt safe in her apartment in Louisville's Parkland neighborhood after someone fired more than 75 bullets into the home in the early morning of Feb. 2. Later that day, her son and granddaughter were shot and killed a few miles away.

Now, more than two months later, she and her daughter are sleeping in their car.

"It's miserable," Hall said. "... I don't

like asking nobody for nothing. I've always been able to get up and get it myself.

Hall isn't the only person who's been forced out of her home by violence in Louisville. Christopher 2X, executive director of local anti-violence nonprofit Game Changers, said he's had many people — he estimates up to 20 a year — reach out to him who were displaced by violence during his 20 years of advocacy in the city.

A decade ago, those people were concentrated in a few LMPD districts, but over recent years it became more of a widespread problem. 2X said he's

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Mother and daughter Cynthia Hall and Delnicha Hall, shown on April 15, left their Parkland home for their safety after it was shot at multiple times.

MARTY PEARL/SPECIAL TO COURIER JOURNAL

"I'm constantly watching ... to see if somebody's following us. Every day, we feel hopeless and don't know what to do."

Cynthia Hall lost her son, granddaughter and home to gunfire

USA TODAY

Geneva summit: Biden calls meeting with Putin 'positive'; US, Russia agree to return ambassadors to their posts. **16A**

Cats aim to bounce back

How youth basketball summer camps could be pivotal in UK's recovery from a disappointing season. **Sports, 1B**

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Initiative

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"action sessions" that functioned like guided conversations to see both sides' perceptions and build trust.

Chandra Irvin of Spalding University, who helped develop it, told The Courier Journal the project is designed to build relationships that will lead to "greater wholeness, to justice, to greater safety and peace in our community."

People often would be reluctant about coming to meetings, but something was "pulling them in," she said. By the end, many would stay afterward to talk.

"It was a seed," she said. "Doing this work involves more than contacts. It involves establishing some kind of fellowship (and engaging) with one another on multiple occasions. That's how you really are starting to not only seed something, but to cultivate something that is growing."

But some community activists and Metro Council members are questioning the value of the program and whether it's the right approach for Louisville now.

Council President David James, D-6th District, called Synergy meetings he attended before March 2020 "horrible, quite frankly" and a "waste of time."

And CLOUT, the organization comprised of religious congregations, has urged Metro Council members to adopt an alternative approach based on "truth and transformation."

The Synergy Project fails to require police to take "responsibility" for harms done to the community and is run by city leaders who themselves lack public trust, the group contends.

"I don't believe that people want another 'Kumbaya' type of program. We need to see something that is going to have definitive action and actually make some transformative changes," Angela Johnson, pastor of Grace Hope Presbyterian Church in Smoketown and CLOUT co-president, told The Courier Journal.

"That is what we're after." Synergy previously received a one-year donation from Papa John's and had not been included in the city budget. The \$675,000 proposed by Fischer, officials say, would help expand the program and fund facilitators who run relationship-building or skill-building sessions.

"We are not committed to a specific model. Our goal is to build resiliency and trust between the members of the Louisville Metro Police Department and the community they are sworn to serve and protect, and that requires honest dialogue and sincere community engagement," Fischer said in a prepared statement.

"We are committed to working with Metro Council and community partners to fund a model that meets our goals."

'The conversation has changed'

The trust between Louisville Metro Police and members of the community was fractured before Taylor's killing on March 13, 2020.

But her death at the hands of police exacerbated that conflict, sparking months of protest, calls to defund the police department and several changes in LMPD leadership.

Does that mean Louisville needs a different approach now?

To Kendall Boyd, the city's equity officer, the answer is no.

"I would agree that the conversation has changed in the wake of everything that we've seen, not just here locally but nationwide," Boyd said.

But that, he said, "furthers the importance of why this Synergy work needs to be done."

"That relationship between LMPD and the community has all but vanished. I mean, there's still dialogue, but we need to start over," Boyd said.

Irvin, too, said there's a need for truth and reconciliation. If there's no acknowledgment of what has happened and who has been harmed, it won't be "sufficient to go and fix it."

But, she said, there needs to be skills-

building work before that can take place.

"If you don't know how to say what you need to say in a way that can be heard, if you don't know how to listen with some generosity, you're not going to get anywhere," she said.

CLOUT, the advocacy group, disagrees. The "polarity thinking" Synergy is based on, they say, argues there is "right-thinking" on both sides and asks each group to give some compromise.

"To me, it's almost tantamount to telling someone who's been abused they have to apologize to the abuser," said Reginald Barnes, the pastor of Brown Memorial CME Church downtown.

Instead, the group has pushed for the city to adopt a program developed by the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College, the same group that developed the group violence intervention program currently being implemented in Louisville.

Reconciliation, according to the group's website, is similar to work done in post-apartheid South Africa. Its three components: acknowledging, understanding and repairing harm.

To James and other critics, Taylor's death, widespread protests and a skyrocketing crime rate make it even more critical for the city to get this initiative correct.

Synergy, they say, is not the best approach.

James told The Courier Journal the initiative was not designed to delve deeply into the conversation or to have "open, honest, raw conversations." But it doesn't get into root causes, he said.

"(Conversations) have to be real. They can't be 'let's do the checkbox,'" he said. "The criticism you hear isn't because we don't think there's a need for dialogue. It's that we believe there's a need for real dialogue."

'Tired of conversations with no action'

LMPD Lt. William Vogt, who is now a training instructor, attended several Synergy action sessions. He also was on the frontlines of protests, as a commander of the Special Response Team.

There, he said, he was able to use the tactic of finding common ground or compromise: It was useful to be able to speak with a protester and identify areas of agreement, like wanting to have safe communities or agreeing there needs to be a mechanism for public safety.

Whether or not it's Synergy, Vogt said, it's essential to foster these types of conversations.

"At this point in time, something — especially something that is tangible and can be implemented rather quickly — is better than nothing," said Vogt.

"We can't leave it up to chance for people to run into people and have these conversations."

More than 450 residents and police officers participated in Synergy action sessions before the pandemic — a figure that leaders of the project call proof that "people are interested in finding ways to address issues of trust and legitimacy."

"Many in the community are tired of conversations with no action," the report said. "These conversations are not easy and often we don't know how to have them."

Kevin Garner, the principal of Shacklette Elementary, a Title I school in Louisville's South End, said he was driven to get more involved by the Taylor protests: "I want our city to be safe," he said, "but I also want the opportunity for people to be heard."

Joining Synergy, he said, requires attendees to be active participants and listeners. And any time citizens can express concerns in a forum that lets them feel safe to do so, it creates a better community.

He has since become a facilitator. "After being a part of this, it really clearly defines it's not an 'us' and 'them.' It just requires us, and I do mean all of us, like both sides, the police as well as the community, to sit down and have a conversation — but to also listen, plan and take action."

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Louisville Metro Police officers removed most of their riot gear while speaking with a protester in June 2020. PAT MCDONOUGH / COURIER JOURNAL

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Millions of Americans take the supplement CoQ10. It's the "jet fuel" that supercharges your cells' power generators, known as mitochondria.

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Medical first: Multiply the "power generators" in your cells

Al Sears, M.D., recently released an energy-boosting supplement based on this NASA nutrient that has become so popular, he's having trouble keeping it in stock.

Dr. Sears is the author of over 500 scientific papers on anti-aging and recently spoke at the WPBF 25 Health & Wellness Festival featuring Dr. Oz and special guest Suzanne Somers. Thousands of people listened to Dr. Sears speak on his anti-aging breakthroughs and attended his book signing at the event.

Now, Dr. Sears has come up with what his peers consider his greatest contribution to anti-aging medicine yet — a newly discovered nutrient that multiplies the number of tiny, energy-producing "engines" located inside the body's cells, shattering the limitations of traditional CoQ10 supplements.

Why mitochondria matter

A single cell in your body can contain between 200 to 2,000 mitochondria, with the largest number found in the most metabolically active cells, like those in your brain, heart and skeletal muscles.

But because of changes in cells, stress and poor diet, most people's power generators begin to malfunction and die off as they age. In fact, the Mitochondria Research Society reports 50 million U.S. adults are suffering from health problems because of mitochondrial dysfunction.

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Biochemical Pharmacology reports that PQQ is up to 5,000 times more efficient in sustaining energy production than common antioxidants.

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"With the PQQ in Ultra Accel, I have energy I never thought possible," says Colleen R., one of Dr. Sears' patients. "I am in my 70s but feel 40 again. I think clearer, move with real energy and sleep like a baby."

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The demand for this supplement is so high, Dr. Sears is having trouble keeping it in stock. "My patients tell me they feel better than they have in years. This is ideal for people who are feeling or looking older than their age... or for those who are tired or growing more forgetful."

"My favorite part of practicing anti-aging medicine is watching my patients get the joy back in their lives. Ultra Accel sends a wake-up call to every cell in their bodies... and they actually feel young again."

Where to find Ultra Accel II

Right now, the only way to get this potent combination of PQQ and super-powered CoQ10 is with Dr. Sears' breakthrough Ultra Accel II formula.

To secure bottles of this hot, new supplement, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at 1-800-628-8301 within the next 48 hours. "It takes time to get bottles shipped out to drug stores," said Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to the customer."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about this product, he offers a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. "Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days, and I'll send you your money back," said Dr. Sears.

The Hotline will be taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number will be shut down to allow them to restock.

Call 1-800-628-8301 to secure your limited supply of Ultra Accel II. You don't need a prescription, and those who call in the first 24 hours qualify for a significant discount. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code NP0621UA88 when you call in.

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