

Lawsuit: Wellspring CEO Told Employee He Would ‘Ruin’ Her If She Went Public With Rape Allegations Against His Son

[institutionalinvestor.com/article/b1mf0g926dlnfd/Lawsuit-Wellspring-CEO-Told-Employee-He-Would-Ruin-Her-If-She-Went-Public-With-Rape-Allegations-Against-His-Son](https://www.institutionalinvestor.com/article/b1mf0g926dlnfd/Lawsuit-Wellspring-CEO-Told-Employee-He-Would-Ruin-Her-If-She-Went-Public-With-Rape-Allegations-Against-His-Son)

A former Wellspring Capital Management employee filed a lawsuit against the son of Wellspring chief executive Bill Dawson, alleging that he raped her and that Bill Dawson threatened to “ruin” her if she publicly shared these allegations.

Taylor Lawrence, who said she worked as the head of marketing and investor relations for the private equity firm from 2010 to 2018, filed her complaint against Christopher Dawson on Thursday in New York State Supreme Court.

Lawrence is alleging that the younger Dawson violated the Gender Motivated Violence Act and is seeking both a declaratory judgment that he violated the law, as well as compensatory and punitive damages.

A spokesperson for SquareFoot, a commercial real estate company, did not return a phone call and emails seeking comment. Christopher Dawson did not return a LinkedIn message seeking comment.

Wellspring Capital did not return a phone call seeking comment. A former spokesperson for the firm passed a request for comment on to Bill Dawson, who had not responded at the time of publication.

Wellspring is a middle-market private equity firm that previously invested in fast-food chain Checkers and Dave & Busters, according to its website. The firm raised \$1.4 billion for its most recent fund in 2018, according to an announcement at the time. Previous investors included the Washington State Investment Board, which contributed \$200 million to the fund, and the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System, retirement system documents show.

According to the lawsuit, Lawrence and Bill Dawson had allegedly arranged to meet at a bar close to his apartment on December 29, 2014. Lawrence waited a while for Dawson, but he told her via Snapchat that he was running late because he was drinking with his sons.

He never showed, so Lawrence walked over to his apartment, which was across the street, to ask him to come down, the complaint said. Lawrence allegedly asked his doorman to call him downstairs. Instead, the doorman told her that Mr. Dawson said she could come up, per the complaint. The elevator opened directly into Dawson’s apartment, rather than in a hallway, according to the complaint.

Christopher Dawson, Bill's son, allegedly told Lawrence that his father was sleeping, and offered her a drink while she waited for her cab.

Lawrence alleges that her drink was spiked with a narcotic, incapacitating her. According to her complaint, Christopher Dawson then allegedly repeatedly raped and sexually assaulted her. The details surrounding the alleged incident, which are included in the suit, are graphic.

Following this, Bill Dawson allegedly told Lawrence that his son bragged about the incident. In response, Lawrence told him it was nonconsensual, according to the complaint.

On another occasion, Lawrence allegedly told the elder Dawson, as well as a managing partner at Wellspring, what happened.

Bill Dawson allegedly responded: "I will destroy you. I will ruin you," if Lawrence ever pursued the allegations. According to the lawsuit, this is why Lawrence did not come forward earlier.

"As the complaint filed today makes clear, Christopher Dawson appears to believe that his privilege and wealth allow him to behave with impunity," Lawrence's attorneys, Douglas Wigdor and David Gottlieb of law firm Wigdor, said via email. Wigdor has represented plaintiffs in several high profile sexual assault and discrimination cases, including one of Harvey Weinstein's accusers. "We look forward to using the Gender Motivated Violence Act to hold him accountable for raping Ms. Lawrence so that she can begin the process of moving forward with her life."