

Wellspring CEO takes leave after explosive rape allegations against his son

 nypost.com/2020/07/14/wellspring-ceo-takes-leave-after-explosive-rape-allegations-against-his-son

By Thornton McEnery

July 14, 2020

A New York buyout baron has taken a leave of absence from his fund after an explosive lawsuit claimed last week that he threatened an ex-employee to keep quiet after she accused his son of raping her.

Bill Dawson is taking time off from his \$2.2 billion private equity firm Wellspring Capital Management, which will investigate the claims of Dawson's threats, according to an internal memo seen by The Post. The memo is addressed to Wellspring's limited partners, the fund's largest and most important investors.

"Mr. Dawson has chosen to take a leave of absence in order to spend more time with his family," writes Wellspring managing partner John Morningstar. "We support his decision to recuse himself while this investigation takes place."

In a complaint filed Thursday, Wellspring's former head of investor relations, Taylor Lawrence, accuses Christopher Dawson of drugging her drink and then raping and sodomizing her at his parents' swanky Lenox Hill apartment on the evening of Dec. 29, 2014, while his father slept in a nearby room.

Lawrence also claims that when she reported the assault to the senior Dawson, he told her that his son had bragged that "he plugged you in the ass" and then threatened her to stay quiet after she mentioned it again at the office, saying, "I will destroy you. I will ruin you.

"These reports...allege behavior that is not only shocking, but completely inconsistent with our corporate values and standards, as well as our long-standing relationship with Mr. Dawson," Morningstar wrote in the Tuesday memo.

The Post also can confirm that Bill Dawson's son, Christopher Dawson, was fired from his director position at real estate tech startup Squarefoot after the accusations surfaced.

"Christopher Dawson is no longer employed at SquareFoot," the firm said in a statement.

A representative for the Dawson family did not respond to requests for comment, but the family was unequivocal in its denial of the original complaint, saying in a statement last week that "The alleged event — said to have happened more than five years ago between a then 18-year-old boy and a then 34-year-old employee of the firm — never happened."

“Given this is ongoing litigation involving Mr. Dawson’s son and a former employee, and does not directly involve Wellspring, we will not be commenting on the civil litigation,” Morningstar wrote in his Tuesday memo.