

HARBOR SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOL LAWSUITS



While the beginning of the school year is steadily approaching, it seems that the Harbor Springs Public Schools may begin the school year on the wrong foot, as the school district has recently announced that there has been a lawsuit filed against the public schools within the district. The former principal for the school, Karey Scholten, has recently filed a lawsuit against the Harbor Springs Public Schools and its superintendent, Mark Tompkins. Scholten has made claims that the work environment was hostile and that she was wrongfully removed from her position within the school, in which she worked as the principal. Scholten was the principal for Blackbird and Shay elementary schools, having started her position there back in 2005. However, she was put on medical leave between the months of March up until June in 2011. She claims that the reason for the medical leave was due to serious stress from her working environment, which caused her to operate a car while under the influence of alcohol. She was arrested for this in August of 2011 when she was caught driving while intoxicated. The lawyer that is representing Scholten, Nicholas Roumel, has said, "Our biggest legal concern that we have is that the superintendent forced a medical leave on Ms. Scholten without any justification for doing so, and that led to a series of events that occurred, kind of like a stone causing ripples in a pond, from people wildly speculating about the nature of Ms. Scholten's medical leave to the disruption in her own life and professional career." Scholten was removed from her position and placed on a separate position as the curriculum director but the position had since been cut due to the budget. Even so, Scholten feels that she was discriminated against and terminated due to her disability, the fact that she is a female, and because of retaliation. She first filed a complaint at the beginning of November in 2011 with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Superintendent for the public schools, Mark Tompkins, has said, "The District is aware of the lawsuit. Although we were not expecting it, especially after the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) and MDCR (Michigan Department of Civil Rights) investigated and dismissed Ms. Scholten's previous discrimination charges against the district." He also said, "We do not believe that we have violated any of Ms. Scholten's legal rights. However, because this is now a matter of pending litigation, the district will answer the allegations through the court process, and not discuss the merits in the media." Tompkins has no problem allowing this to run its course but feels that the school district has not discriminated on Scholten at all.