

Mother of Trevyan Rowe sues RCSD, city of Rochester

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Trevyan Rowe's mother Friday filed a wide-ranging and long-anticipated lawsuit against the Rochester City School District and city of Rochester, alleging their missteps and inaction cost the 14-year-old boy his life last March.

Rowe wandered away from School 12 on South Avenue March 8, 2018, after getting off the bus in the morning. He made his way to the Frederick Douglass-Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge, from which he fell into the Genesee River and died.

"Defendants must be held accountable for their admitted failures that led to the tragic death of Trevyan, not just for the sake of his soul and his family, but for the sake of the children who still walk the halls of the schools of Rochester," the lawsuit reads.

"Until there is a radical shift in the way that those who watch our children exercise their responsibility ... and indeed in the way Defendants value human life, all schoolchildren in Rochester are at risk."

The lawsuit, filed in state Supreme Court, does not specify a dollar amount that Trevyan's mother, Carrie Houston, is seeking.

It accuses the defendants of compounding her grief with legal tactics: "Even though Defendants have publicly apologized to Plaintiff Ms. Houston and her family and admitted their failures, privately they have subjected the Decedent's mother to multiple depositions and have refused to offer the family anything more than words."

The district declined to comment. City spokesman Justin Roj said in a statement: "The City of Rochester anticipated the lawsuit from the family of Trevyan Rowe. This tragedy inspires us to continue to stand up for each and every child in the city of Rochester, to create a system where they have equal access to a quality education, and a fighting chance at life."

Among others named in the lawsuit include Mayor Lovely Warren, former RCSD Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams and the busing company First Student, which did not respond to a request for comment.

Familiar charges

The accusations against the district and city are familiar ones, in particular after the release in March of a joint investigation by the state Education Department and Attorney General's office.

For the district, that includes first of all a failure to properly recognize the consequences of Trevyan's disability. The state investigation pointed to numerous instances where the district had failed to put in more robust supports even after Trevyan repeatedly wandered, including off school grounds, and spoke about suicide.

The lawsuit also alleges that the district "lied to Ms. Houston (and) covered up Trevyan's disappearance," and failed to promptly produce surveillance footage from outside the school. The district has disputed that last charge, and the state investigation does not include it.

The city, meanwhile, is accused of failing to follow its own emergency response procedures, particularly in dispatching help to the bridge after several drivers called 911 to report seeing a boy matching Trevyan's description during rush hour traffic. Both the city and district have acknowledged the likelihood of a significant

financial settlement relating to Trevyan's death. In 2016, the family of a boy who died under similar circumstances in New York City received an award of \$2.6 million.

A vigil for Trevyan Rowe. MAX SCHULTE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE
