

# Four More Student Sexual Abuse Lawsuits Filed Against Maryland's Prestigious Key School

*Seeking justice decades later for Student-Survivors, plaintiffs file under historic Child Victims Act (CVA)*

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND, USA, November 28, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- There are now [six individual lawsuits](#) filed by women, all in their 60s, who as students in the 1970s at the prestigious Key School were groomed, then repeatedly sexually abused, by multiple male members of the faculty. Each plaintiff alleges that the horrific acts inflicted by trusted teachers and staff occurred with the full knowledge of administrators; they assert the school's sexualized culture was widely accepted by leadership, enabling predator-employees to abuse students over years. The survivors are seeking accountability and justice; they are jointly represented in their civil claims by attorneys from [Jenner Law](#), [Grant & Eisenhofer](#), and Baird, Mandalas, Brockstedt & Federico. Theirs are the first, but far from the last, complaints against the prep school filed under Maryland's historic Child Victims Act (CVA) of 2023.

**#KeyToo**  
**Justice for The Key School**  
**Sexual Abuse Students-Survivors**



Ann Applegarth

Sally Fisher Benson



Carolyn Surrick

Megan Venton



Valerie Bunker

Cari Nyland

Photos: Courtesy of the Key School Survivors

**#KeyToo - Justice for The Key School**  
**Sexual Abuse Students-Survivors**

Only after extensive media investigations did Key School's 2018 internal inquiry fault the school for failing to protect its vulnerable students from pervasive harm, noting there were not only faculty but officials "who were aware of the abuse and inappropriate conduct and chose not to intervene."

Two of the six pending lawsuits (Carolyn Surrick v. Key School, Richard E. Sohmer, and Paul Stoneham, Anne Arundel County Circuit Court, No. 14084877 and Valerie Bunker v. Key School et al., USDC, Northern District of Maryland, No. 1:23-cv-02662), were lodged shortly after the CVA became law on October 1st. Ms. Surrick, 64, of Annapolis, and a Key student from 1972-1976, is a renowned musician, author and survivors' rights activist. Her #Keytoo social media posts significantly raised the visibility of the systemic, well-documented sexualized culture at Key School long before the CVA was enacted.

Ms. Surrick, like her classmate and survivor-plaintiff Ms. Bunker, and many other student-victims,



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*Sally Fisher Benson, Ph.D*

was groomed, sexually abused, and repeatedly raped by Key School faculty predators– on and off-campus, including in their perpetrator’s residences - while attending the school that proudly proclaimed its progressive roots. According to her October filing, Ms. Surrick was impregnated by one of her assailants when she was 14. Two of the three faculty perpetrators are named in Ms. Surrick’s complaint.

Ms. Bunker, 64, a Key student from 1973-1977, also details in her complaint grooming, incapacitation with drugs, alcohol, or both, and repeated sexually abuse by teachers she and her classmates trusted to respect and safeguard them. Those are among the common themes throughout the survivors’ chilling accounts; they are also among the reasons the legal team is now seeking to have all the Maryland-filed cases consolidated and assigned to one Anne Arundel Circuit Court judge.

The four most recent complaints, all filed on the public docket in Anne Arundel County are similar in many respects to the Surrick-Bunker cases, graphically detailing the devastating physical and emotional sexual abuse experienced by the students, the permanent life-altering impacts, and unspecified damages (those are determined by a jury) sought on behalf of the Key School survivors:

- Sally Fisher Benson, Ph.D., 62, now living in New Mexico, working as a literacy instructor at an adult men’s maximum security prison, (Benson v. The Key School, Incorporated, et al., C-02- CV-23-002322)
- Ann N. Applegarth, 64, a special events producer and Baltimore resident, (Applegarth v. The Key School et. al, C-02-CV-23-002370)
- Cari Anna Nyland, N.D., 64, of Annapolis, a practicing naturopathic physician in Oregon, (Cari Anna Nyland v. The Key School)
- Megan Venton, 65, of Annapolis, an industrial artist, (Venton v. The Key School, Incorporated, et al., C-02-CV-23-002270).

Ms. Benson said after the filing of her complaint, “What happened to us is permanently damaging. In a K-12 school, adults are responsible for students’ well-being as minors. Instead, this level of abuse has instilled ongoing trauma, which is incomprehensible to anyone who did not experience it. I teach men incarcerated in a maximum-security prison, who carry immense trauma of childhood abuse, addiction, and violence in addition to having broken relationships with formal education. They are held accountable for their choices. The adults who chose to violate students were educated professionals. Where is their accountability? As survivors of institutional abuse, I hope we have the opportunity to tell our truth in a Maryland courtroom.”

Attorneys Robert K. Jenner, Elisha Hawk (Jenner Law), Steven J. Kelly (Grant & Eisenhofer), and Phil Federico, (BMB&F), noted regarding The Key School cases, “We are honored and humbled to

represent The Key School Survivors and we will continue to fight for justice on their behalf, at the trial court and, if necessary, before the Maryland Supreme Court.

Robert Jenner

Jenner Law

+1 301-980-0067

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