

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Herz Law In Receipt of Heavily Redacted
CISD Investigation

*Caleb Elliott's athletic director father, middle
school principal both resign shortly before report
published concluding no wrongdoing*

DALLAS (JANUARY 17, 2026)—Herz Law has performed a preliminary review of the eighty-five-page report of Ms. Giana Ortiz prepared at the request of Celina ISD (the “Report”).¹ On the evening of Friday, January 16, 2026, before the weekend, the ISD released the Report with redactions. Herz Law prosecutes the first of several lawsuits against Celina ISD for the conduct of its former assistant coach, Caleb Elliott, in recording² young boys in the football locker room nude and bathing. The Report purports to address these allegations: centrally, whether other school staff knew or were willfully blind to Caleb Elliott’s abuse or tendency to commit abuse.

Because of the breadth of the Report and its heavy redaction, Herz Law cannot render an opinion on every point of the Report at this time. As to the merits of this Report, it, like many non-litigation investigations, is a one-sided affair. It is conducted within a scope set forth by the school

district, without placing witnesses under oath, and without subjecting them to cross-examination: the chance to ask questions of one’s own. No other interested party has had the opportunity to observe the underlying questioning to determine whether it was complete, fairly done, or fairly reflected in this Report. Many corporations and organizations employ outside counsel to conduct such investigations, with the hope that the imprimatur of an attorney will protect the investigation’s findings from seeing the light of day.³ Unfortunately, in this context, the ISD, as a government entity, may also try to hide behind additional laws affecting the government.

The Report is, at least, a step forward compared to the lackluster factfinding of the Celina Police Department, which publicly stated that it did not review what it considered to be the internal business of the ISD, closing its investigation into this matter after arresting Caleb Elliott and demanded that others go out and find evidence before it will ascertain whether others failed to report abuse, a crime in Texas.⁴

The Report is heavily redacted. A prefatory page to the Report explains these redactions as mandatory under the Public Information Act (“PIA”)⁵ and other laws. The Public Information Act is used to protect informants, victims, and innocent parties just as often as it is abused—or disregarded—to conceal local government malfeasance. Thankfully, the PIA’s deadlines and procedures were recently tightened,⁶ which is

¹ Giana Ortiz, *Investigation Report—Celina Independent School District* (Dec. 31, 2025), available at <https://cdn.hertzlaw.com/celina/def/FinalInvestigationReport-redacted.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/9YXL-TW44>].

² Either photographing, videotaping, or both, by handheld cell phone. To the extent it is known now, this does not include, after September 2025, hidden or stationary recording devices.

³ See, e.g., *In re Team Transp., Inc.*, 996 S.W.2d 256 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1999) (orig. proceeding).

⁴ Tex. Fam. Code § 261.109.

⁵ See Tex. Gov’t Code ch. 552 (often called an “open records” act).

⁶ See Tex. H.B. 4219, Act of June 20, 2025, 89th R.S., ch. 452 (codified at Tex. Gov’t Code ch. 552),

probably the reason that the Report is available in the first place.

It is beyond Herz Law's involvement in this suit to determine whether these cited laws are legitimate bases for censoring the Report under the PIA. Further, without seeing the material so censored, it is impossible to make that determination. As the PIA requires, the ISD has submitted the Report to the Office of the Attorney General for an opinion on the legitimacy of the redactions. Herz Law and the victim families remain hopeful that, in the public interest, the OAG will abide by the guiding principle of the PIA: "that government is the servant and not the master of the people" and, as such, "[t]he people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for them to know and what is not good for them to know."⁷

It is not important to Plaintiffs' lawsuit whether the redactions stand in the version of the Report disclosed under the PIA. Redactions which are appropriate under the PIA are not necessarily valid in the course of civil discovery.⁸ Importantly, even if the redactions of the Report are not removed in response to civil discovery, the underlying facts and witnesses are not protected from disclosure: a party to civil litigation must, without awaiting a discovery request, disclose persons having knowledge of relevant facts and any witness statements, and such material is well within the permissible scope of discovery.⁹

Notwithstanding the above, Plaintiffs continue to review the contentions of the Report. Beyond the Report, Plaintiffs believe that, where the Police and the ISD have not satisfied the public that

⁶ <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/89R/billtext/html/HB04219I.htm> [<https://perma.cc/F45T-9F3Y>].

⁷ Tex. Gov't Code § 552.001(a).

⁸ Tex. Gov't Code §§ 552.005, 552.0055.

the ISD is blameless in the conduct of Caleb Elliott, the rigors of civil litigation in an adversarial system will shed light on the truth.

Herz Law is a Plaintiff's personal injury trial law firm in Dallas, Texas, in business for 32 years, run by Jill Herz, Harry Herz, and Paul Herz. Herz Law sues on catastrophic injuries, sexual abuse, invasion of privacy, and more, and has represented thousands of clients. For additional information, call Herz Law at 214-745-4567.

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