

Litigation

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Texas Gets Settlement in Bilingual School Labor Trafficking Suit

By Ryan Autullo

- Paxton said owners threatened to have employees deported
- School admits no wrongdoing and disputes allegations

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) announced a \$250,000 settlement Wednesday to end a human trafficking lawsuit alleging owners of a bilingual preschool lured foreign-born employees to Texas with false promises.

The settlement requires no admission of wrongdoing from the school, Austin Eco Bilingual School, or its owners. It comes without an injunction, which Paxton had sought, and stipulates that the school disputes the state's allegations. The school will remain open.

"The litigation had become so costly that the purpose was to get this settled and avoid going to trial," the school's lawyer, Matthew Ford of Ford O'Brien Landy, LLP, said. He added that in the course of discovery he showed Paxton's allegations are "false or extremely exaggerated."

Paxton said in a statement, "This settlement will ensure that no one is subjected to the horrors of human trafficking or unlawful labor practices." The alleged actions "were despicable and I am pleased to have secured justice for the victims."

Paxton in 2021 sued the school and its owners, Adriana Rodriguez and Enrique Rodriguez, for allegedly enticing at least seven foreign-born employees with promises of lawful status and a decent salary. The allegations go back to 2013. The attorney general's office opened an investigation the following year.

The lawsuit said Adriana Rodriguez threatened to have employees deported if they didn't continue to work, often for less pay than promised.

The resolution lets the school avoid significant costs in defending the claims at trial, Rodriguez said Wednesday.

"I run a very successful school," she said. "Over the 10 years I made it stronger and better and welcomed so many students from different backgrounds."

The parties finalized the agreement on Dec. 11, court records show.

The case is Texas v. Austin Eco Bilingual Sch., Tex. Dist. Ct., No. D-1-GN-21-002303, announced 1/29/25.

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