

LOCAL NEWS

18-year-old sues Mass. town for allowing sex offender to operate business where she was assaulted

When renewing the license for Hillers Pizza, Hopkinton officials knew or should have known about owner Petros Sismanis's criminal record, the lawsuit alleges.



A photo of the Town Offices on Main Street in downtown Hopkinton. *Jim Davis/The Boston Globe Staff, File*



By **Abby Patkin**

January 14, 2026 | 4:23 PM

3 minutes to read

A Massachusetts woman is suing **Hopkinton** officials for allowing a sex offender to run the local pizzeria where she was sexually assaulted, accusing the town of negligence after the shop's owner targeted her.



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When renewing the license for Hillers Pizza, Hopkinton officials knew or should have known about Sismanis's criminal record, including his 1998 guilty plea on indecent

assault and battery charges, the lawsuit alleges.

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Now 18, the woman is seeking monetary damages in excess of \$1 million, court records show. She is suing Sismanis and Hillers for allegedly creating a sexually hostile work environment and intentionally inflicting emotional distress, among other allegations. She has also accused Hopkinton and its police chief, Joseph Bennett, of negligence and due process violations.

“While Town and police officials are sympathetic to the circumstances of what happened to the Plaintiff, The Town and Police acted appropriately and constitutionally under the circumstances presented and known to them at the time,” said Douglas Louison, a lawyer representing Hopkinton officials.

He added: “We will be asserting our legal arguments against these claims when we file our responsive pleading to the complaint.”

What happened?

The woman was only 16 years old when Sismanis lured her into the pizza shop’s basement and forcefully kissed and hugged her, according to the lawsuit. The complaint states she was “terrified, frozen in fear and did not know what to do,” and ended up calling her mother.

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When the teen’s mother came to pick her up, Sismanis purportedly begged them not to report the incident to police, stating he would rather die than have law enforcement involved, according to the lawsuit. He also blocked the mother’s car to prevent them from driving away.

Sismanis was convicted in June of indecent assault and battery on a person 14 or older and two counts of witness intimidation. He was sentenced to six months in jail and ordered to register as a sex offender, court records show.

A native of Greece, Sismanis was in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody by the time the teen filed her lawsuit; ICE records indicate he is being held at a facility in California. It was not immediately clear whether he has retained a lawyer for the federal suit.

According to her lawsuit, the victim has suffered from “severe emotional distress and post-traumatic stress disorder” following the assault.

She is more withdrawn and remains “overwhelmed with feelings of shame, humiliation, and suffocating sadness,” the complaint states. “She now harbors deep feeling[s] of distrust of men, which makes interacting with them, in any environment, difficult and unhealthy.”

Pizzeria owner's criminal record under scrutiny

Sismanis was previously indicted in 1997 on charges of rape and indecent assault and battery on a person older than 14, court records show. His later guilty plea on two counts of indecent assault and battery required him to register as a Level 2 sex offender for 20 years, according to **NBC10 Boston**, which first reported on the Hillers controversy.

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However, online **Sex Offender Registry Board** records only list Level 2 sex offenders classified after July 2013; anyone seeking information on a Level 2 sex offender classified before then must contact their local police department.

According to the lawsuit, Hopkinton police had also received several other complaints from some of Sismanis's female employees prior to the 2023 assault.

The complaint says Sismanis had been renewing his common victualler license with the town since at least 2016, a process that involves review and feedback from Hopkinton's various departments. Despite Sismanis's prior criminal record and complaints, the town gave him the green light anyway, the lawsuit notes.

“The Town and Chief Bennett knew or should have known that its failure to act on known risks related to Sismanis created a foreseeable risk to employees,” the teen alleged.

As a result, according to the complaint, she now “feels as if her dignity has been stripped from her.”



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Abby Patkin is a general assignment news reporter whose work touches on public transit, crime, health, and everything in between.

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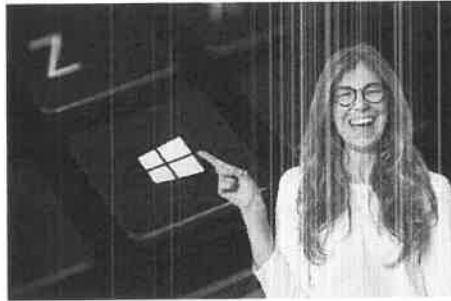
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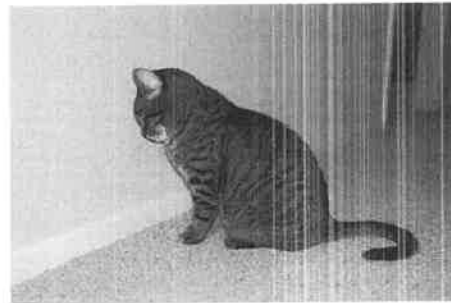


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