

Shawn Ryan defies Kanakuk lawsuit threat over interview on child sex abuse

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One of the nation's top podcasters says he is not backing down after Kanakuk Ministries threatened to sue him over statements about past child sex abuse at the summer camp.

On Tuesday, in a [video posted](#) to his YouTube channel, Shawn Ryan said he had received a [demand letter](#) from Kanakuk, a prominent Christian camp in southwest Missouri. The letter accused Ryan of having "callous and malicious disregard of the truth" and demanded he retract one of his statements and apologize for its content.

"Here's my response: No," said Ryan in his video. "I don't negotiate with pedophiles or the people who defend them. I'm not taking anything down. I'm not apologizing. And I'm damn sure not going to stop talking about child sexual abuse in a Christian camp that continues to operate on the same grounds where horrific abuse took place."

Ryan also posted a [lengthy letter](#) his attorney sent in response.

Kanakuk's letter followed Ryan's release of a four-hour [podcast](#) with abuse prevention advocate Elizabeth Carlock Phillips, as previously [reported](#) by *The Roys Report (TRR)*. Phillips' late brother, Trey Carlock, was a victim of former Kanakuk camp counselor Pete Newman.

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In an interview published on Jan. 19, 2026, Shawn Ryan speaks with Elizabeth Carlock Phillips. (Photo: Facebook)

In 2010, Newman was sentenced to three life terms on charges of sexual abuse against 57 victims.

Speaking to Ryan, Phillips recounted shocking details from her years of dialogue with abuse survivors of the Christian camp, investigators and subject matter experts. She told *TRR* that Kanakuk has threatened her with legal action since 2021, when she began speaking out.

“They have never followed up with a lawsuit, and we have not taken anything down,” said Phillips. “The information we’ve posted has only been reinforced and corroborated by additional sources and survivors coming forward.”

The recent lawsuit threat is the latest flash point in a years-long abuse scandal that has consumed [Kanakuk](#). Founded in 1926, it claims more than 500,000 children have participated in its Christian summer camps over the past century.

First [reported](#) by Christian author Nancy French in 2019, Kanakuk’s abuse record has [prompted](#) multiple lawsuits and was the subject of an Emmy-winning [documentary](#). Kanakuk’s own letter admits that “between 20 and 30 lawsuits” have been filed in recent years related to abuses at their camps.



Students at a Kanakuk camp. (Photo courtesy of the Kanakuk website.)

Facts About Kanakuk, a hub of abuse survivors of the camp, [has chronicled](#) alleged incidents involving at least a dozen former Kanakuk staff members and volunteers.

TRR reached out to Kanakuk Ministries for comment but received no response.

On its [website](#), Kanakuk posted an 830-word response to Ryan's podcast. The ministry called Ryan's interview with Phillips "a shocking misuse of a very public platform to defame Kanakuk," and accused the podcast of "mistruths, missing context, and fabricated 'facts.'"

Scope of Kanakuk abuses debated

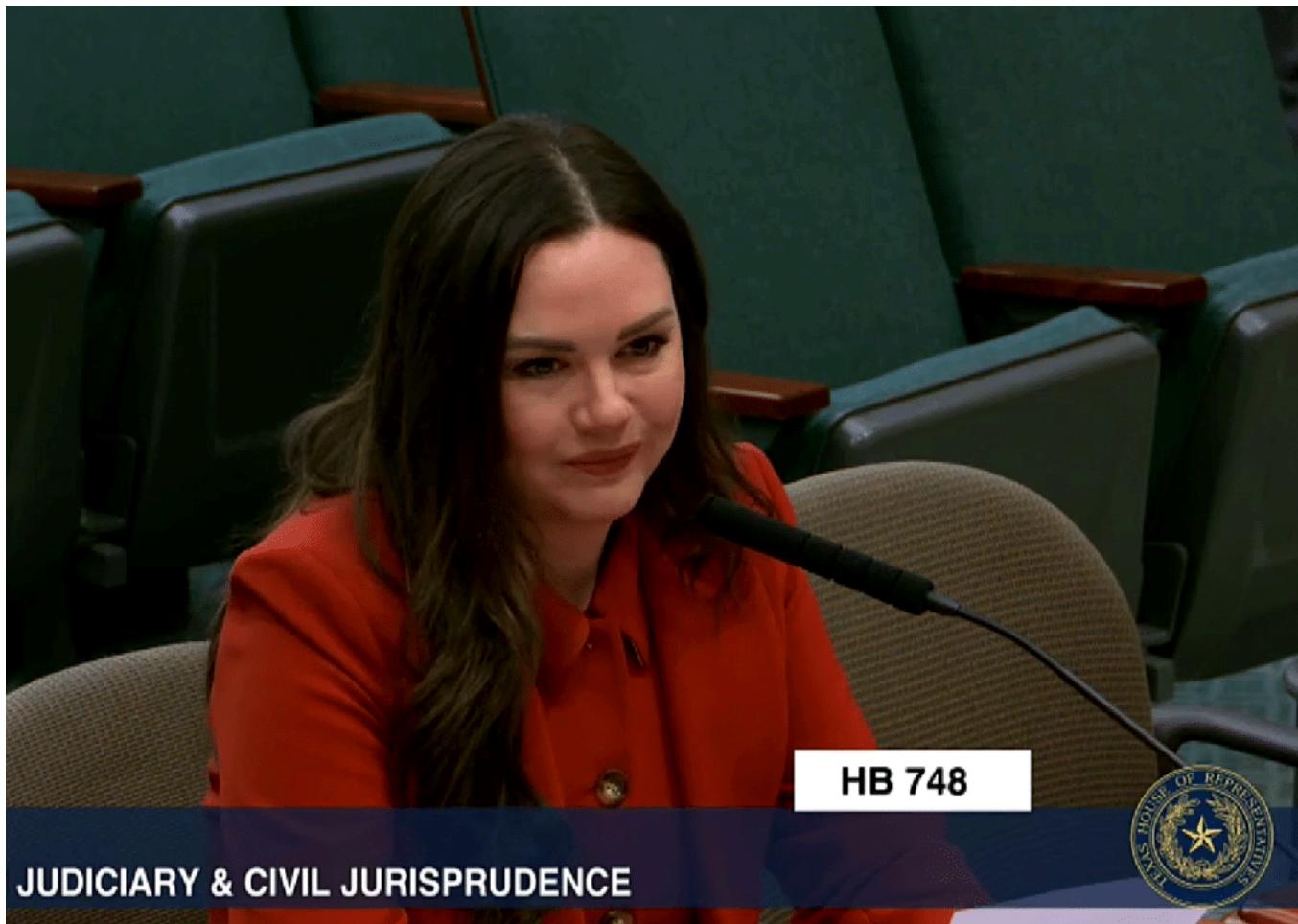
In the [demand letter](#), attorney Brian Wade with the Springfield, Missouri, law firm Husch Blackwell referred to Ryan's supposed "false, disparaging, and defamatory statement about Kanakuk." Kanakuk specifically disputes the number of alleged abuse victims.

During her podcast interview, Phillips told Ryan she is aware of "definitely thousands (of) child sexual abuse victims." Later, when Ryan [interviewed](#) Congressman Ro Khanna (D-IL) about disgraced financier and sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, Ryan repeated this figure about Kanakuk.

Wade demanded Ryan "take down that portion of the interview and publicly apologize for your defamatory statements" made in the conversation with Khanna.

However, Phillips stands by her estimate.

“Parents deserve to know the volume of perpetrators associated with Kanakuk Ministries and Joe White,” she told *TRR*. “I have worked (to) understand the scope and scale of what’s happening at Kanakuk and its affiliated entities, with the sole goal of exposing the truth.”



On Mar. 19, 2025, Elizabeth Carlock Phillips testified at the Texas House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence. (Video screengrab)

Kanakuk’s demand letter also claims confidentiality agreements have been “often initiated by the victim’s parents or the victim.”

Phillips disputes this assertion, too. “I’ve spoken to many victims, and nothing I’ve heard aligns with Kanakuk’s statement that victims requested the NDAs,” she told *TRR*. “Since they’ve refused to do the right thing and release NDAs, we’ve had to change the law.”

Currently, four states have passed [Trey’s Law](#)—named after Phillips’ brother—which bans NDAs for sex abuse victims. Recently, three other states have [introduced](#) similar bills.

Ryan defiant

A former Navy SEAL, Ryan gained national notoriety for his Tennessee-based company [Vigilance Elite](#), which has trained law enforcement in combat tactics. His work went viral in 2019 after [reports](#) that he trained action star Keanu Reeves during the *John Wick* films.

Since 2023, Ryan has shifted to media production, with his eponymous show consistently ranked as a Top 20 podcast and his YouTube channel garnering 5.7 million subscribers.



Shawn Ryan in combat setting. (Photo: Instagram)

Having reinvented himself several times, Ryan seems unafraid of the legal threats, as he said in his Tuesday video.

“We’ve made it clear: if they want to sue me, bring it on,” said Ryan. “We welcome discovery. We welcome depositions of Kanakuk leadership about what they knew, when they knew it, and what they did—or didn’t do—to protect children.”

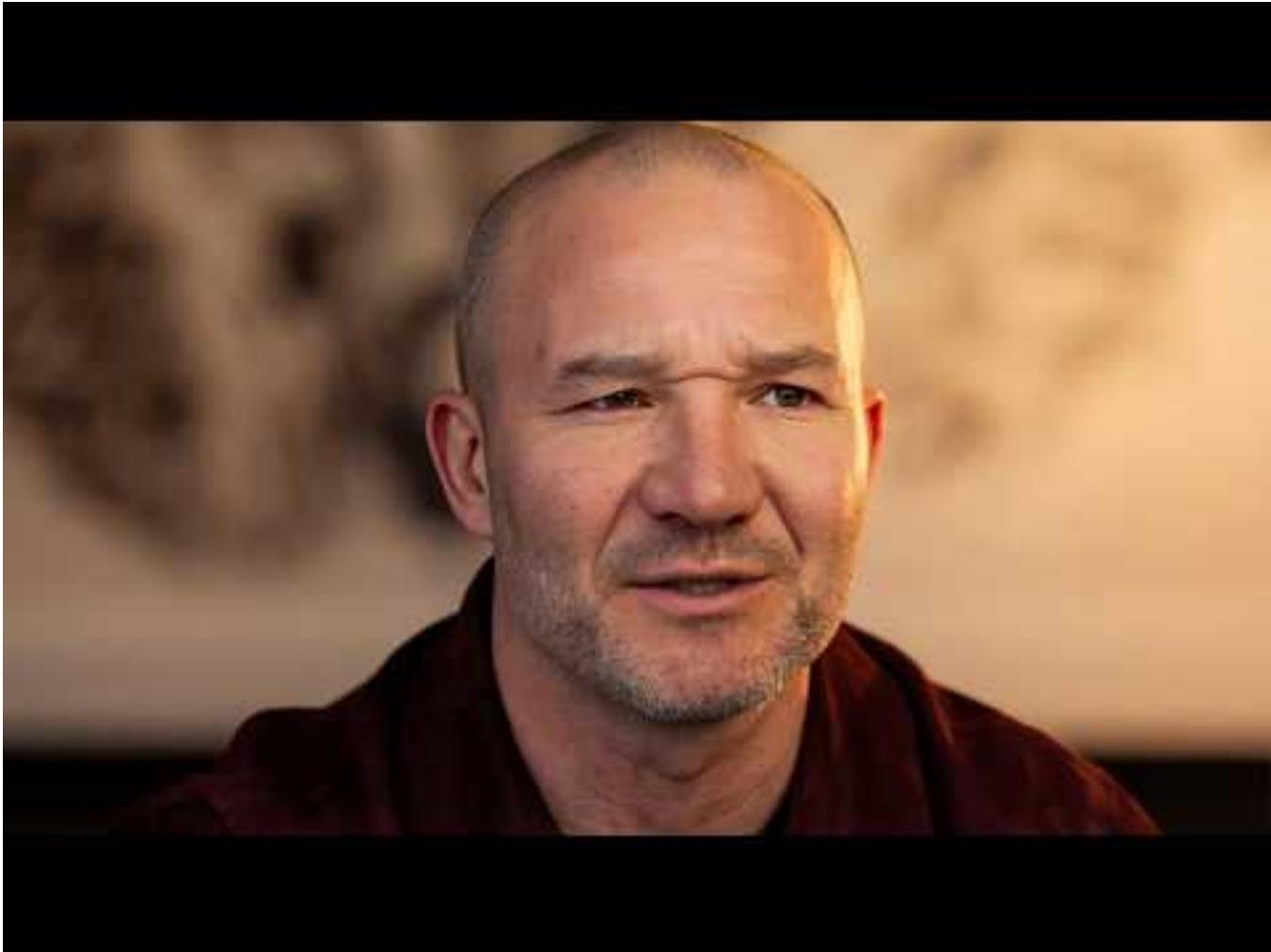
Ryan’s attorney Timothy Parlatore formally responded to Wade with a [five-page letter](#). “Your client’s demand for retraction and apology is rejected in its entirety as legally and factually baseless,” he stated.

The subject matter of Phillips’ interview clearly resonated with Ryan, who speaks often of his Christian faith during his programs.

“Sexual abuse at youth camps—especially Christian camps that are supposed to be safe places—is a matter of urgent public concern,” he said on Tuesday. “Parents have a right to know. Kids have a right to be protected. And survivors have a right to speak.”

For her part, Phillips said she is focused on getting Trey’s Law passed in more states.

“It’s past time our country moves toward a system that prioritizes the safety and healing of children over institutional protection and reputation,” she added. “I don’t know what could be more important.”



[Watch on YouTube](#)



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