



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Families of Four Baltimore City Firefighters Who Were Killed/Injured in Rowhome Collapse Plan to Sue the City, State and Fire Department

City and state officials received notice of a potential claim by the families today from Miler Stern Lawyers, which represents the families.

BALTIMORE, MD, December 8, 2022 – The families of four Baltimore City firefighters - three who were killed in January when a burning vacant rowhome collapsed on them and one who was injured – plan to file a wrongful death lawsuit against multiple entities including Baltimore City, the state of Maryland and the Baltimore City Fire Department, Miller Stern Lawyers announced today.

The families of Kelsey Sadler, Paul Butrim, Kenneth Lacayo, and John McMaster today notified city, state and fire department officials of a potential claim, holding them responsible for the deaths and injury of firefighters who were acting in the line of duty on January 24, 2022 when a rowhome at 205 S. Stricker St. partially collapsed.

“The families of these brave firefighters are shattered by a tragedy that did not need to happen,” said Miller Stern Lawyers, which has represented the families since February. “While there are issues with the way the fire department operates that is not the reason why these firefighters died. They died because the city and our officials and the state of Maryland failed to act when they should have,” said Kevin Stern of Miller Stern Lawyers.

“Accountability must occur in order to effect change,” added Daniel Miller, of Miller Stern lawyers. “Our legal system allows for accountability, and we firmly believe these families deserve all of the answers and changes they seek. How many times have our elected officials made promises or started a project and come up short?”

On December 2, Maryland Occupational Safety and Health issued a report citing major failures within the city and the fire department. Shortly after the report was issued, Fire Chief Niles Ford resigned.

“While the report and the resignation of Chief Ford are steps toward accountability, it does NOT change the history of 205 S. Stricker St.,” Miller Stern added. “In addition, the report does not address the real reasons why three firefighters died and a fourth was injured.”

The reasons the firefighters’ lives were in jeopardy include:

14,000+ vacant homes

The city and state have largely ignored the over 14,000 vacant homes in Baltimore City that pose a hazard not only to firefighters and first responders but to residents. Many of these homes are unfit for human habitation and threaten the lives of firefighters who are called to extinguish fires. 205 S. Stricker St. was a condemned vacant property that should not have been standing.

Code X-Ray

The city and fire department abolished Code X-Ray, a project launched in 2010 to mark unsafe buildings. These marks alerted firefighters to potential dangers in vacant buildings. Yet, the program was scrapped nearly a decade ago for unclear reasons and reinstated 10 months after the tragedy on Stricker Street, only after criticism. If Code X-Ray was not abolished it could have prevented the deaths of Paul Butrim, Kelsey Sadler, and Kenny Lacayo and the critical injuries to John McMaster.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Project C.O.R.E. debacle

The State of Maryland, through Project C.O.R.E., has earmarked millions of dollars to the City government for demolition/rehabilitation of the condemned properties, however use of these funds allegedly focuses on areas of the city where economic underpinnings are strong rather than addressing the condemned vacant structures that threatened lives. This was a vacant property that all firefighters should have been aware of, as it presented a risk to their safety. 205 S. Stricker should have been demolished years ago, after the first fire there, but the City of Baltimore and our elected officials chose to allocate the City's resources elsewhere.

"Kelsey Sadler, Paul Butrim, Kenneth Lacayo, and John McMaster walked into a death trap that was already set from the past, when they entered the burning rowhome on January 24." "While they would like to pin the blame on the fire department, Baltimore City and state of Maryland elected officials cannot hide behind firefighter failures. They are responsible for these deaths. Their negligence has resulted in devastation for the families and to the broader firefighting community," Miller Stern said.

"This cannot and will NOT CONTINUE to occur for the families of Paul Butrim, Kelsey Sadler, Kenneth Lacayo, and John McMaster. The excuses offered by the City Council are unacceptable; the city is more concerned with their bond rating than the lives of our first responders. Our firefighters deserve more from us, and no family should have to go through what these families are going through today."

About Miller Stern Lawyers

Miller Stern Lawyers is a law firm founded by Daniel J. Miller and Kevin D. Stern. Areas of practice include medical malpractice and personal injury. For more information about the firm click [Miller Stern Lawyers](http://millersternlawyers.com).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Daniel J. Miller | 410-529-3476 | dan@millersternlawyers.com

Or

Kevin Stern | 410-529-3476 | kevin@millersternlawyers.com