

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

McKenzie Keller v. Delquan Maurice Danford; Extended Stay America, Inc.; ESA P Portfolio LLC; ESA P Portfolio Operating Lessee, LLC; Red Lion Hotels Corporation; Sonesta International Hotels Corporation; WHC816, LLC; RL Salt Lake, LLC; Choice Hotels International, Inc.; Salt Lake Lodging, LLC; and CRRC Properties, LLC

Keller · No. 2:25-cv-595-TS-JCB · Decided March 31, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Utah grants the Hotel Defendants’ motions to dismiss claims brought under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and Utah Code section 77-38-15. The court concludes that the TVPRA claims are not shown to be time-barred at the pleading stage, but that the complaint fails to plausibly allege the defendants’ requisite knowledge of force, fraud, or coercion supporting beneficiary or perpetrator liability. The court also dismisses the Utah-law claim, dismisses Extended Stay America, Inc. for lack of personal jurisdiction, and denies the plaintiff’s motion to amend.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Utah
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ted Stewart
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Utah
DECIDED	March 31, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-595-TS-JCB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved to dismiss Plaintiff’s complaint under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), and Plaintiff moved to amend the complaint. The court granted the motions to dismiss and denied the motion to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true, views them in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party, and determines whether the complaint states a

	plausible claim for relief. The court may consider the complaint, attached exhibits, incorporated documents, judicially noticeable matters, and undisputed documents central to the claims. A statute-of-limitations defense may be resolved at the pleading stage only when the complaint itself establishes all facts necessary to sustain the defense.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum decision; persuasive authority only
PARTIES	McKenzie Keller v. Delquan Maurice Danford, Extended Stay America, Inc., ESA P Portfolio LLC, ESA P Portfolio Operating Lessee, LLC, Red Lion Hotels Corporation, Sonesta International Hotels Corporation, WHC816, LLC, RL Salt Lake, LLC, Choice Hotels International, Inc., Salt Lake Lodging, LLC, CRRC Properties, LLC

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

motion to amend

statute of limitations

personal jurisdiction

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

human trafficking

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the TVPRA claims were barred by the statute of limitations on the face of the complaint.
2. Whether the complaint plausibly alleged beneficiary liability under 18 U.S.C. § 1595 based on the Hotel Defendants' knowing benefit from a venture engaged in sex trafficking.
3. Whether the complaint plausibly alleged perpetrator liability under the TVPRA based on the Hotel Defendants' knowing or reckless disregard of force, threats, fraud, or coercion.
4. Whether the court had personal jurisdiction over Extended Stay America, Inc.
5. Whether Plaintiff's request for leave to amend in her opposition and her separate motion to amend should be granted.

HOLDINGS

1. Dismissal of the TVPRA claims as time barred was not warranted at the pleading stage because the complaint alleged that trafficking occurred through 2015, leaving open a conceivable set of facts under which incidents occurred after July 21, 2015.
2. The complaint failed to plausibly allege that the Hotel Defendants knew or should have known that the venture from which they allegedly benefited involved sex trafficking through force, threats, fraud, or coercion.

3. The complaint failed to plausibly allege perpetrator liability because it did not show that the Hotel Defendants knew of or recklessly disregarded the use of force, threats, fraud, or coercion to cause Keller to engage in commercial sex acts.
4. The court properly denied Plaintiff's one-sentence request for leave to amend and denied her separate motion to amend as futile.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“As long as there is a conceivable set of facts, consistent with the complaint, that would defeat a statute-of-limitations defense, questions of timeliness are left for summary judgment (or ultimately trial), at which point the district court may determine compliance with the statute of limitations based on a more complete factual record.”

“Taking each of the above-discussed allegations as true and drawing all reasonable inferences therefrom, the Complaint fails to support that Defendants should have known Plaintiff was being subjected to force, threats, fraud, or coercion in relation to her sex work.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Keller alleged that Danford trafficked her through force, threats, and abuse from 2014 through 2015, requiring her to engage in commercial sex and controlling the proceeds. She stayed at three Salt Lake City hotels on multiple occasions, where she alleged that hotel personnel could observe bruises, a tattoo bearing Danford's street name, frequent male visitors, discarded condoms, sex-work advertisements, and her meetings with customers. She did not allege that Danford was present at the hotels, interacted with hotel personnel, paid for the rooms, or otherwise appeared to control her activities there.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Keller filed suit on July 21, 2025, asserting civil claims under the federal Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act and Utah Code section 77-38-15 based on alleged hotel involvement in sex trafficking. The Hotel Defendants moved to dismiss, arguing that the TVPRA claims were untimely and inadequately pleaded; Extended Stay America, Inc. also challenged personal jurisdiction. Keller conceded that the Utah statutory claim was not viable and that personal jurisdiction was lacking over Extended Stay America, Inc. After filing responses, Keller separately moved to amend to add ESA Management, Inc. and remove Extended Stay America, Inc.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- GFF Corp. v. Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc., 130 F.3d 1381, 1384 (10th Cir. 1997)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 557, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)

- Commonwealth Prop. Advocs., LLC v. Mortg. Elec. Registration Sys., Inc., 680 F.3d 1194, 1201 (10th Cir. 2012)
- Tellabs, Inc. v. Makor Issues & Rights, Ltd., 551 U.S. 308, 322 (2007)
- Jacobsen v. Deseret Book Co., 287 F.3d 936, 941 (10th Cir. 2002)
- Bistline v. Parker, 918 F.3d 849, 876 (10th Cir. 2019)
- Sidney Hillman Health Ctr. of Rochester v. Abbott Labs. Inc., 782 F.3d 922, 928-29 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Doe (J.R.L.) v. Hilton Domestic Operating Co. Inc., 810 F. Supp. 3d 194, 200, 204-05 (D. Mass. 2025)
- Doe v. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Inc., No. 1:24-CV-00109-DAE, 2024 WL 4224915, at *3 (W.D. Tex. Aug. 30, 2024)
- A.D. v. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Inc., No. 4:19-cv-120, 2020 WL 8674205, at *2 (E.D. Va. July 22, 2020)
- Doe (L.M.) v. 42 Hotel Raleigh, LLC, 717 F. Supp. 3d 464, 470, 472 (E.D.N.C. 2024)
- Mueller v. Deutsche Bank Aktiengesellschaft, 777 F. Supp. 3d 329, 339-40 (S.D.N.Y. 2025)
- Lydia K. v. G6 Hosp. Franchising LLC, No. 3:25-CV-0755-N, 2026 WL 370057, at *4-*5 (N.D. Tex. Feb. 10, 2026)
- A.B. v. Interstate Mgmt. Co., 746 F. Supp. 3d 997, 1007 (D. Or. 2024)
- Doe v. Hyatt Corp.
- Ricchio v. McLean, 853 F.3d 553 (1st Cir. 2017)
- A.B. v. Marriott Int'l, Inc., 455 F. Supp. 3d 171, 193-94 (E.D. Pa. 2020)
- C.S. v. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Inc., 538 F. Supp. 3d 1284 (M.D. Fla. 2021)
- Marcy C. v. MGM Resorts Int'l, No. 2:24-CV-2027 JCM (MDC), 2025 WL 3187434, at *5-*6 (D. Nev. Nov. 13, 2025)
- M.A. v. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Inc., 425 F. Supp. 3d 959, 962 (S.D. Ohio 2019)
- T.D.P. v. Choice Hotels Int'l, Inc., 725 F. Supp. 3d 784, 797-98 (S.D. Ohio 2024)
- Albers v. Bd. of Cnty. Comm'rs of Jefferson Cnty., Colo., 771 F.3d 697, 706 (10th Cir. 2014)
- Frank v. U.S. West, Inc., 3 F.3d 1357, 1365 (10th Cir. 1993)