

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

William J. Wallace v. Wesleyan University

No. 3:23-cv-01461 (VAB) (D. Conn. Jan. 30, 2026) · No. No. 3:23-cv-01461 (VAB) · Decided January 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Connecticut rules on Wesleyan University’s motion to strike portions of William J. Wallace’s Third Amended Complaint. The court grants the motion as to paragraphs 40 and 44 but denies it as to paragraphs 10–19, 24–25, and specified portions of paragraphs 26, 32, 36, and 38. The surviving claim concerns alleged religious discrimination under Title VII and Connecticut law, and the court orders Wallace to file a Fourth Amended Complaint consistent with the ruling.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Connecticut
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Victor A. Bolden
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Connecticut
DECIDED	January 30, 2026
DOCKET	No. 3:23-cv-01461 (VAB)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(f) to strike portions of Plaintiff's Third Amended Complaint as immaterial, impertinent, and prejudicial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A Rule 12(f) motion to strike is disfavored and should be granted only for a strong reason. The movant must show that no evidence supporting the allegations would be admissible, that the allegations have no bearing on the issues, and that allowing them to remain would prejudice the movant. Where relevance is doubtful, the court should generally deny the motion, particularly absent prejudice.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	William J. Wallace v. Wesleyan University

TOPICS

- pleadings
- civil procedure
- employment discrimination
- title vii
- religious discrimination

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Employment discrimination

Title VII

Religious discrimination

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether allegations concerning campus anti-Catholic events, funding decisions, Wallace's complaints, and related employment events were immaterial or impertinent under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(f).
2. Whether allegations that Wallace's termination resulted from his advocacy for Muslim students or a Muslim chaplain should be stricken because they did not support his surviving claim that he was discriminated against because of his own religion.
3. Whether paragraphs 40 and 44, which expressly alleged that Wallace's termination for advocating for Muslim students and a Muslim chaplain constituted religious discrimination, should be stricken.

HOLDINGS

1. The allegations in paragraphs 10 through 19, paragraphs 24 and 25, the challenged portion of paragraph 26, the challenged portions of paragraphs 32 and 36, and the challenged portions of paragraph 38 were not subject to striking at the pleading stage because Wesleyan had not shown that they had no essential relationship to the claim, that supporting evidence would be inadmissible, or that their inclusion would cause undue prejudice.
2. The court denied the motion to strike most of the challenged allegations even though some referenced Wallace's advocacy for Muslim students or a Muslim chaplain, because Wesleyan had not shown that allowing the allegations to remain would cause undue prejudice; however, the allegations could not be used to establish that Wallace was discriminated against because of his own religion.
3. Paragraphs 40 and 44 were stricken because they directly alleged that Wallace's termination for advocating for Muslim students and a terminated Muslim chaplain constituted religious discrimination, contrary to the court's prior ruling limiting the surviving claim to discrimination based on Wallace's own religion.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because paragraphs 40 and 44 directly allege that Mr. Wallace’s termination due to his advocacy for the Muslim community constitutes religious discrimination, in violation of the Court’s ruling, these paragraphs will be stricken.” (III.C)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

William J. Wallace, a Catholic priest, served as Wesleyan University's Catholic chaplain. He alleged that Wesleyan officials knew of concerns about anti-Catholic treatment on campus and that he later faced negative performance treatment, a performance improvement plan, and termination after raising concerns about religious programs, chaplain staffing, and related matters. His Third Amended Complaint included allegations concerning both Catholic and Muslim communities, and Wesleyan sought to strike allegations it viewed as unrelated to Wallace's surviving religious-discrimination claim.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff initially filed suit in Connecticut Superior Court, and Defendant removed the action to the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut. The court granted Defendant's motion to dismiss the original complaint, later allowed amendment of certain claims, and Plaintiff ultimately filed a Third Amended Complaint asserting religious discrimination. Defendant then moved to strike specified allegations; the court granted the motion as to paragraphs 40 and 44 and denied it as to the other challenged allegations.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Holland v. Chase Bank United States, N.A., 475 F. Supp. 3d 272, 275 (S.D.N.Y. 2020)
- Brady v. Basic Research, L.L.C., 101 F. Supp. 3d 217, 225 (E.D.N.Y. 2015)
- Roe v. City of New York, 151 F. Supp. 2d 495, 510 (E.D.N.Y. 2001)
- Gssime v. Nassau County, No. 09-CV-5581(JS)(ARL), 2014 WL 810876, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Feb. 28, 2014)
- Lipsky v. Commonwealth United Corp., 551 F.2d 887, 893 (2d Cir. 1976)
- Schramm v. Krischell, 84 F.R.D. 294, 299 (D. Conn. 1979)
- Vega v. Hempstead Union Free School District, 801 F.3d 72, 85 (2d Cir. 2015)
- Buon v. Spindler, 65 F.4th 64, 79 (2d Cir. 2023)
- Littlejohn v. City of New York, 795 F.3d 297, 311 (2d Cir. 2015)
- Santiago v. ACACIA Network, Inc., 634 F. Supp. 3d 143, 152 (S.D.N.Y. 2022)
- Torre v. Charter Communications, 493 F. Supp. 3d 276, 290 (S.D.N.Y. 2020)
- Meyenhofer v. Larsen & Toubro Infotech Ltd., 503 F. Supp. 3d 39, 51 (S.D.N.Y. 2020)
- Mentus v. Gallina Development Corp., No. 6:25-CV-06122 EAW CDH, 2025 WL 2778114, at *5 (W.D.N.Y. Sept. 30, 2025)
- Wahlstrom v. Metro-North Commuter Railroad Co., No. 96 CIV. 3589 PKL, 1996 WL 684211, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 25, 1996)
- Dietz v. Bouldin, 579 U.S. 40, 47 (2016)