

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

M.J., a minor by his parents and guardians,	)	
ALBERT JONES and KAREN JONES,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	No.
RONALD CLEMMONS,	)	
LOWER COUNCIL SCHOOL DISTRICT,	)	
BUD SMITH, and	)	
ACE TRUCKING COMPANY,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	
	)	

DEFENDANT RONALD CLEMMONS’S ANSWER TO COMPLAINT AT LAW

NOW COMES the Defendant, RONALD CLEMMONS (“CLEMMONS”), by and through his attorneys, Carrington & Martinez Law Firm, P.C., and as and for his Answer to the Complaint at Law, states as follows:

1. At all relevant times, Plaintiff M.J. (“M.J.”), a minor, by his parents and guardians ALBERT JONES and KAREN JONES, was a citizen and resident of Grayslake, Lake County, Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the allegations contained in Paragraph 1 of Complaint at Law to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of said allegations, therefore Defendant neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof.

2. At all relevant times, Defendant RONALD CLEMMONS (“CLEMMONS”) was a citizen and resident of Libertyville, Lake County, Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 2 of Complaint at Law.

3. At all relevant times, Defendant LOWER COUNCIL SCHOOL DISTRICT (“DISTRICT”) was an organization under the laws of Illinois and was headquartered in Grayslake, Lake County, Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the allegations contained in Paragraph 3 of Complaint at Law to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of said allegations, therefore Defendant neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof.

4. At all relevant times, Defendant BUD SMITH (“SMITH”) was a citizen and resident of McHenry, McHenry County, Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the allegations contained in Paragraph 4 of Complaint at Law to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of said allegations, therefore Defendant neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof.

5. At all relevant times, Defendant ACE TRUCKING COMPANY (“ACE”) was an Illinois corporation organized under the laws of Illinois and headquartered in Gurnee, Lake County, Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the allegations contained in Paragraph 5 of Complaint at Law to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of said allegations, therefore Defendant neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof.

6. At all relevant times, Defendant CLEMMONS, a 69-year-old, duly licensed school bus driver, was employed by and under the direction, supervision, and control of Defendant DISTRICT.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS admits that he was a duly licensed school bus driver employed by Defendant DISTRICT at all relevant times, however Defendant lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the remaining allegations contained in Paragraph 6 of Complaint at Law to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of said allegations, therefore Defendant neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof.

7. At all relevant times, Defendant SMITH, a duly licensed truck driver, was employed by and under the direction, supervision, and control of Defendant ACE.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS lacks sufficient information and knowledge of the allegations contained in Paragraph 7 of Complaint at Law to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of said allegations, therefore Defendant neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof.

8. On August 15, 2025, Plaintiff M.J. was a passenger on Defendant DISTRICT's bus, operated by Defendant CLEMMONS, when a collision with Defendant ACE's truck and trailer, operated by Defendant SMITH, occurred on Route 120 near the I-94 ramp in Gurnee, Illinois.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS admits that Plaintiff M.J. was a passenger on the subject bus and that Defendant CLEMMONS was operating the subject bus on Route 120 near the I-94 ramp in Gurnee, Illinois, on August 15, 2025, however Defendant lacks sufficient information and knowledge regarding the remaining allegations pertaining to

Defendant SMITH and Defendant ACE, therefore Defendant CLEMMONS neither admits nor denies but demands strict proof thereof. .

COUNT I – Defendant RONALD CLEMMONS

1-8. For paragraphs 1 through 8 of Count I, Defendant realleges his Answers to paragraphs 1-8 as set forth above.

9. On August 15, 2025, Defendant CLEMMONS, as bus driver, had a duty of care to operate the Defendant DISTRICT's bus in a reasonably safe manner to avoid hazard to all passengers, including Plaintiff M.J.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS denies the allegations contained in Paragraph 9 of Count I in that duties arise by operation of law and not by the conclusory allegations of the pleader. Defendant admits only to the existence of those duties imposed by law but affirmatively denies that he breached any such duties. Further, Defendant denies all remaining allegations contained in Paragraph 9 that are not specifically admitted.

10. As the driver of the bus, Defendant CLEMMONS had a duty to adhere to the IL Vehicle Code, 625 ILCS 5/1-100 *et seq.*

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS denies the allegations contained in Paragraph 10 of Count I in that duties arise by operation of law and not by the conclusory allegations of the pleader. Defendant admits only to the existence of those duties imposed by law but affirmatively denies that he breached any such duties. Further, Defendant denies all remaining allegations contained in Paragraph 10 that are not specifically admitted.

11. Defendant CLEMMONS breached his duty by committing one or more of the following acts or omissions:

- a. Failed to properly report any risks to the safe condition of the bus;
- b. Failed to ensure all passengers were wearing seatbelts as required by DISTRICT's policy;
- c. Failed to adhere to all DISTRICT safety protocols;
- d. Failed to follow the designated field trip route when he became lost while driving the bus;
- e. Failed to operate the bus in a reasonably safe manner to avoid hazard to all passengers when the bus became involved in a collision with the truck; and
- f. Failed to follow IL Vehicle Code, as evidenced by a traffic citation issued at the scene.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS denies the allegations contained in Paragraph 11, subparagraphs (a) through (f) of Count I of Complaint at Law.

12. That as a direct and proximate result of the foregoing negligent and/or careless acts and/or the omissions by Defendant CLEMMONS, Plaintiff M.J. was involved in the collision between the bus and truck and was thrown from his seat, causing serious and possibly permanent injuries and damages.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS denies the allegations contained in Paragraph 12 of Count I of Complaint at Law.

13. Plaintiff M.J.'s injuries and damages include, but are not limited to:
- a. concussion;
 - b. wounds needing stitches on head and face;
 - c. multiple broken ribs, impacting his breathing;

- d. two broken legs, inhibiting his ability to walk;
- e. surgery to pin and set both legs;
- f. pain, suffering, and emotional distress, both past and future, including loss of enjoyment of life and normal childhood activities, resulting from his injuries, surgeries, and ongoing physical limitations;
- g. future medical treatment(s), given the complications associated with M.J.'s young age; and
- h. such other damages as will be proved at trial in this matter.

ANSWER: Defendant CLEMMONS denies the allegations contained in Paragraph 13 of Count I of Complaint at Law.

COUNT II – Defendant LOWER COUNCIL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Defendant CLEMMONS makes no response to the allegations contained in Count II of Complaint at Law in that these allegations are not directed to this Defendant. To the extent that any allegations are deemed directed at this Defendant, in any respect, said allegations are denied consistent with the remainder of this pleading.

COUNT III – Defendant BUD SMITH

Defendant CLEMMONS makes no response to the allegations contained in Count III of Complaint at Law in that these allegations are not directed to this Defendant. To the extent that any allegations are deemed directed at this Defendant, in any respect, said allegations are denied consistent with the remainder of this pleading.

COUNT IV – Defendant ACE TRUCKING COMPANY

Defendant CLEMMONS makes no response to the allegations contained in Count IV of Complaint at Law in that these allegations are not directed to this Defendant. To the extent that any allegations are deemed directed at this Defendant, in any respect, said allegations are denied consistent with the remainder of this pleading.

WHEREFORE, the Defendant, RONALD CLEMMONS, prays this Honorable Court enter an order dismissing Plaintiff's Complaint at Law, with prejudice, at Plaintiff's costs, or for judgment in Defendant RONALD CLEMMONS's favor with prejudice, and for such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

DEFENDANT DEMANDS TRIAL BY A 12 PERSON JURY

By: /s/ Eva L Carrington

Eva L. Carrington, Attorney for
RONALD CLEMMONS

AFFIDAVIT

I, Eva Carrington, being first duly sworn on oath, state that I am one of the attorneys of record for Defendant RONALD CLEMMONS herein and that neither the Defendant nor I have knowledge and information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth or falsity of any allegations contained in paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the Complaint at Law.

/s/ Eva L Carrington

Eva L. Carrington, Attorney for
RONALD CLEMMONS

CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO SECTION 1-109

Under penalties as provided by law pursuant to Section 1-109 of the Code of Civil Procedure, the undersigned certifies that the statements set forth in this instrument are true and correct, except as to matters therein stated to be on information and belief as to such matters the undersigned certifies as aforesaid that she verily believes the same to be true.

/s/ Ronald Clemmons

Ronald Clemmons

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