



Accident That Killed Infant Leads to \$4.2 Million Settlement in Essex County

A Clifton woman agreed to a \$4.2 million settlement on June 29 in *Yarrish v. Hines*, an Essex County suit over a crash that killed her baby daughter and left her severely injured.

Jamie Yarrish was driving on west-bound Route 3 in Clifton on Aug. 25, 2020, when her Honda Civic was struck from behind by a dump truck belonging to Sanzari Asphalt Co. and driven by Chad Hines.

Yarrish's 1-year-old daughter, Jaelyn Acevedo, was riding in a child safety seat in the rear of the vehicle. Yarrish and her daughter were taken to a local hospital, where the child was diagnosed with massive head injuries and was kept alive so that her organs could be utilized for donation, said the plaintiffs' lawyer, **Evan Goldman of Goldman, Davis, Krumholz & Dillon** in Hackensack. Jaelyn died four days later.

Yarrish suffered thoracic vertebral fractures, which resulted in surgery and the insertion of hardware. She also suffered internal bleeding in the

brain. Yarrish was out of work for 10 months after the accident and she still receives physical therapy and psychotherapy, Goldman said.

Yarrish was talking to a friend on a hands-free phone at the time of the crash. After the crash, the friend reported hearing Yarrish screaming and the baby crying, and that both of them continued to moan, according to Goldman. That enabled a medical expert for the plaintiff, physician Peter Salgo, to opine that Jaelynn experienced conscious pain and suffering, Goldman said.

Yarrish sued Hines and Sanzari, and brought claims for bystander trauma, lost wages, pain and suffering and emotional distress.

Hines, the truck driver, was indicted on charges of vehicular manslaughter and death by auto, according to several media accounts. He told police he failed to realize that traffic was stopped when he struck Yarrish's vehicle, according to Goldman. The suit claimed his record had multiple convictions for driving while intoxicated and for various drug offenses.



PHOTO BY CARMEN NATALE

The settlement was reached on June 29 after mediation with John Keefe, a former Appellate Division presiding judge now with Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer in Woodbridge. There was \$2 million in coverage with the primary carrier, United Fire Insurance Group, and \$4 million in excess coverage with Markel Insurance.

Hines and Sanzari were represented by Anthony Guidice of Barry, McTiernan & Wedinger in Edison. He did not return a call about the case.

— **Charles Toutant**