

Statement from Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)

“These are challenges that affect all of our nation’s workplaces, including mine, and the question is whether or not they are taken seriously. As I have long said, when allegations are made in the workplace, we must believe women so that serious investigations can actually take place, we can learn the facts, and there can be appropriate accountability. That’s exactly what happened at every step of this case last year. I told her that we loved her at the time and the same is true today.” Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

Statement from Gillibrand communications director Whitney Mitchell Brennan

Unfortunately, no workplace is exempt from employee misconduct, including ours. What’s important is that when an individual reports allegations of sexual harassment or discrimination in our workplace, an immediate and thorough investigation is conducted in consultation with experts, which is precisely what occurred in this case.

At every step of the process, immediate action was taken by the office. The previous allegations in question were investigated in consultation with Senate Employment Counsel, and included multiple interviews with relevant current employees who could potentially corroborate the claims. A full and thorough investigation into the evidence revealed employee misconduct that, while inappropriate, did not meet the standard for sexual harassment. However, because the office did find unprofessional behavior that violated office policy, including derogatory comments, the office took strong disciplinary action against the employee in question and he was given a final warning.

Recently, we learned of never-before reported and deeply troubling comments allegedly made by this same individual. The office immediately began another investigation and interviewed relevant witnesses, which has led to the office terminating the employee from staff last week.

Senator Gillibrand is committed to ensuring allegations are handled seriously, investigated, and followed by appropriate punishment, which is why she helped pass stronger sexual harassment protections in Congress and prioritizes proper harassment training to better prevent these occurrences and encourage future reporting.