

INVESTIGATION REPORT

Prepared for Ken Martin, Chair
Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party

Prepared by:

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I. SCOPE AND SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

On August 11, 2018, Austin Monahan posted a message on Facebook regarding his mother, Karen Monahan, and her relationship with former Congressman and current candidate for Minnesota Attorney General, Keith Ellison. In the post, Austin Monahan claimed to have seen a video in mid-2017 showing Keith Ellison “dragging my mama off the bed by her feet, screaming and calling her a ‘fucking bitch’ and telling her to ‘get the fuck out of his house.’” He claimed to have seen text and twitter messages from Mr. Ellison alternately saying that he wanted her back, and then “shaming, bullying and threatening her.” The next day, Karen Monahan tweeted: “That was my son who posted and its [sic] true. He wouldn’t lie about his own mom.” She claimed the altercation on the bed occurred in September 2016.¹

The August 11, 2018 post by Austin Monahan occurred three days before the Minnesota primary election on August 14. Since that post, Ms. Monahan has written extensively on social media and provided multiple media interviews accusing Keith Ellison of trying to drag her off the bed by her feet and ankles. While Ms. Monahan’s narrative has focused on allegations of “narcissist abuse” and emotional abuse as well as physical abuse, public attention has centered on the alleged “dragging off the bed” incident, which has been characterized in the media as physical domestic abuse and even a “violent assault.” Ms. Monahan claims to have videotaped the alleged incident. Mr. Ellison flatly denies the alleged incident and has said the video could not exist because he did not engage in that behavior. Following the primary election, the DFL Party retained me to conduct an investigation into the allegation by Ms. Monahan that Mr. Ellison engaged in physical abuse.

Given the broad spectrum of allegations made by Ms. Monahan about Mr. Ellison, it is important to properly define the scope of this investigation. In addition to the single allegation of “physical abuse,” Ms. Monahan has alleged that she suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of the emotional abuse she endured during her relationship with Mr. Ellison. She accuses him of “narcissist abuse.” This investigation does not purport to resolve these questions. It is beyond the scope of this investigation – and the qualifications of this investigator – to ascribe psychological labels or diagnoses to the parties. The purpose of this investigation is thus not to determine whether Ms. Monahan was subjected to “narcissist abuse” (not a formally recognized term), or whether Ms. Monahan has post-traumatic stress disorder and the potential causes. This is not in any way intended to diminish the seriousness of emotional abuse or to suggest it is less important than physical abuse; however, those aspects of Ms. Monahan’s allegations are outside of the scope of this assignment.

Rather, this investigation is limited to the allegation that Mr. Ellison tried to drag Ms. Monahan off the bed while yelling profanities at her (the allegation is hereinafter referred to as

¹ As discussed below, the date of the alleged incident has now been clarified to be August 26, 2016.

“the incident”).² Ms. Monahan’s allegations of narcissist abuse, as well as Mr. Ellison’s allegations regarding Ms. Monahan’s behavior, are considered insofar as they lend context to the allegation under investigation or are probative of the credibility of the witnesses. This report will summarize the evidence that exists which supports the truth of the allegation and which casts doubt on the allegation, and my factual findings relating to this allegation based on that evidence.

II. PERSONS INTERVIEWED³



III. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED⁴

- Numerous text and Twitter messages and Facebook postings to and from Karen Monahan and to and from Keith Ellison, produced by both sides
- Karen Monahan handwritten notebook from January 2017
- Calendar of Keith Ellison August 2016
- Letter from Karen Monahan to MH dated December 31, 2017
- Affidavit of Keith Ellison dated August 27, 2018
- Social media postings
- News articles and interviews of both Karen Monahan and Keith Ellison
- Letter dated September 6, 2018 and partial treatment notes dated June 6, 2018 of Dr. Johanna L. Lamm
- Park Nicollet, November 28, 2017 Progress notes (partial)

² The mandate of this investigation was also not to conduct a background investigation of either party, but to focus on this single allegation of physical abuse within the context of the relationship between Ms. Monahan and Mr. Ellison.

³ Several of the witnesses I interviewed (on both sides) would speak to me only if I promised confidentiality. Accordingly, I have withheld the names of the witnesses other than Karen Monahan, Keith Ellison, and Kim Ellison from the version of this report that will be publicly released.

⁴ I reviewed all documents voluntarily submitted by both parties in in response to my request to provide documents proving or supporting their respective positions.

IV. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A. Background of Relationship Prior to the Alleged Incident (August 26, 2016)

Karen Monahan is a 44 year-old woman who works as an advocate for the Sierra Club. Ms. Monahan met Keith Ellison in about 2006 when she was with Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (EJAM). At the time, Mr. Ellison was running for Congress for the first time and was married; Ms. Monahan was separated and later divorced. Ms. Monahan and Mr. Ellison began a romantic relationship after Mr. Ellison had legally separated from his wife in about 2011. They both have adult children from other relationships. As their relationship became more serious, Ms. Monahan began spending most of her time at his house. She moved in with him in 2015.

By all accounts, the relationship was volatile and the two argued frequently. Mr. Ellison cited as an example a trip to Istanbul in 2015 where Ms. Monahan accompanied him. He stated that she became upset with him and stormed out into the city by herself at night. He said he attempted to convey to her not only the security concerns, but that they were under scrutiny at all times and she could not behave in that way. Mr. Ellison stated that they considered breaking up in the spring of 2016 and he went on a trip to Israel without Ms. Monahan. During that time period, he had coffee with a long-time friend and current girlfriend, MH, and invited her to dinner. But then he and Ms. Monahan decided to continue trying to work things out and they stayed together.

Mr. Ellison recalled only one time in 2013 where he called Ms. Monahan a “bitch” following an argument over purchasing something that he thought was too expensive. Ms. Monahan told him never to call her a “bitch” again and made it clear that she would not tolerate that. Ms. Monahan said it was only toward the end of the relationship that Mr. Ellison became more disrespectful of her and called her a “fucking bitch” “a few times.” Ms. Monahan denied calling Mr. Ellison names, but acknowledged that when she was upset she would cry and yell. According to both parties, in mid-2016 Ms. Monahan had become increasingly suspicious that Mr. Ellison was lying to her and being unfaithful. By Mr. Ellison’s account, Ms. Monahan constantly accused him of cheating and lying and the accusations became more frequent, angry and aggressive. Mr. Ellison maintains that he was not unfaithful to Ms. Monahan when they were together,⁵ but he could not allay her suspicions. By Ms. Monahan’s account, throughout 2016, Mr. Ellison became increasingly angry and his reactions when she criticized him or became frustrated with him (over things like being late) became disproportionate and were “ramping up.”

On August 25, 2016, Mr. Ellison attended a forum on transgender issues and afterward met a female friend to discuss a personal issue. By his account, when he arrived home, Ms. Monahan asked where he had been and who brought him home. He responded that he had been at the forum and his staff had brought him home. Ms. Monahan accused him of lying as she had already verified both the time he left the forum and that his staff had not driven him home. She told him she could not trust him. According to Mr. Ellison, he admitted to Ms. Monahan that he had lied. He told her the meeting with the friend was entirely innocent, but because he knew she would react in a

⁵ As discussed below, Mr. Ellison and Ms. Monahan flatly dispute when they were together and when they broke up.

volatile manner he could not tell her about it. He said that was the reason they had to break up: he knew he could not tell her the truth because she did not trust him, and he did not want to be in a relationship where he had to lie. Mr. Ellison said he told Ms. Monahan they were done and she would have to find a place to live; she responded several times, “You’re kicking me out!?” Mr. Ellison stated that his voice “matched hers,” elevated but not to the point of yelling. He described it as a “tough moment,” emotional and intense but with no screaming. He said that following this argument, they went to bed at different times, but he did not recall that she slept in the guest bedroom.

Ms. Monahan said after she confronted him about lying, Mr. Ellison became “enraged,” was “seething” with anger, and told her to stop trying to “shame” him. (Mr. Ellison admitted that he could have said something along the lines of “you’re trying to shame me.”). She said Mr. Ellison claimed the meeting with the female friend was innocent but that he did not tell her about it because he knew she would accuse him of cheating. Ms. Monahan said he became scary. She then went to bed in a separate bedroom and they had no further contact that evening.

B. The Alleged Incident

Ms. Monahan claims that the alleged physical altercation occurred early the next morning, August 26, 2016.⁶ She states that she was lying sideways across the bed on her stomach with her head toward the wall and her feet toward the door of the guest bedroom. She was listening to a podcast on her phone. She claims Mr. Ellison entered the room and said: “Hey, I need you to take the trash out.” She nodded her head but did not look up at him. According to Ms. Monahan, Mr. Ellison then said “Hey I’m talking to you. You better listen to me!” in a raised voice. She said she then turned her phone camera on to videotape and flipped the camera to face her. She said she did so because she wanted to “get his voice on tape.” Ms. Monahan states that she held the phone in her left hand as she continued to lie on her stomach. She responded, “I said yes.” He then said, “Bitch, get the fuck out of my house. You’re a bad guest. I’m telling you to get the fuck out of my house.” Ms. Monahan claims that Mr. Ellison then grabbed her ankles and tried to pull her off the bed but she resisted by sinking her weight into the bed and holding on to the edge of the bed with her right hand. She claims he then swatted at her slipper, which fell off her foot, and left the bedroom, saying that she’d better be gone when he got home. According to Ms. Monahan, Mr. Ellison then left the house on a trip and did not return that day.

Some public reports have stated that Mr. Ellison pulled or dragged Ms. Monahan off the bed, but Ms. Monahan’s allegation is that he “tried” to pull her off the bed, but she was able to remain stationary by holding on to the edge of the bed with one hand. Dragging off of the bed would necessarily suggest that her body left the bed and made contact with the floor or another object, and would suggest a different degree of physical contact than what is alleged here. Ms. Monahan does not allege that she was physically injured or harmed in the incident.

⁶ Ms. Monahan initially claimed the incident occurred in September 2016. After reviewing the calendar and surrounding events to put it in context, such as the transgender forum on August 25, she agrees that the date at issue would have been August 26, 2016.

Mr. Ellison states that to the best of his recollection, the morning after the argument described above, he woke up and got ready to leave for a canoe trip. He recalls what he wore on the trip. He believes Ms. Monahan was still sleeping when he left and does not recall speaking to her at all that morning. He denies that, either that morning or at any time, he screamed and swore at Ms. Monahan or grabbed her ankles and tried to pull her off the bed. Mr. Ellison denies any incident of physical abuse at any time during the relationship and Ms. Monahan alleges no other physical abuse or physical contact aside from the single incident.

C. Events Subsequent to the Alleged Incident

Ms. Monahan claims that after the incident (on Friday August 26, 2016) she called a friend and told him she and Keith had had a fight, he had called her a “bitch” and she was feeling like “the lowest of the low.” She did not tell this friend or anyone else about the allegation of physical abuse at this time. She stated that she immediately started looking for apartments and sought to borrow money from friends in order to move out. She said by Sunday she had found an apartment to sublet but it was not available for 1½ months. Mr. Ellison was out of town in the days following the incident. Ms. Monahan said that she stayed for a few days at a friend’s home, which was vacant and used as a spare home for guests, but then returned to Mr. Ellison’s home the next week. Ms. Monahan claims that Mr. Ellison sent her a text over the weekend, telling her “he was sorry and he didn't want her to leave.” Neither party produced those text messages or Ms. Monahan’s responses, so I cannot assess the content of these conversations immediately following the alleged incident. After she returned to his home that week, they made up and attended the Revolution concert at First Avenue together on September 3, posting pictures of themselves on social media. Ms. Monahan continued to live with Mr. Ellison for the next six weeks or so and then moved into her own apartment at the end of October 2016.

Although no longer living together, Ms. Monahan stated that they continued to be romantically involved. They attended several public events together. Mr. Ellison acknowledged that during the period between October 2016 and January 2017, they explored reconciling and had many discussions about how to make their relationship work. Mr. Ellison states that he still loved Ms. Monahan but the terms of the relationship needed to change. He admitted they were intimate on at least one occasion in December 2016 or January 2017, but maintains that during this time period they were not “back together” and Mr. Ellison felt he was free to see other people. Mr. Ellison recalls an argument in October 2016 where he told Ms. Monahan, “You’re not my girlfriend,” to which she responded, “I am your girlfriend.” He claims he responded, “then we need to talk about how to move forward,” and they discussed how things needed to change for the relationship to work. Mr. Ellison admitted to becoming involved with two other women during the late 2016 to early 2017 time frame. He does not view this as being unfaithful as he considered himself and Ms. Monahan to be broken up, despite continuing to explore reconciliation.

Ms. Monahan has a different view of their relationship during the October 2016 – January 2017 time frame. Ms. Monahan’s suspicions of infidelity were escalating in late 2016 and when she found evidence that Mr. Ellison was seeing other women (which he admits), she took it to confirm those suspicions. Ms. Monahan says she broke up with Mr. Ellison on January 15, 2017 and “never went back.” Ms. Monahan began posting about narcissism and “gaslighting” (a form

of emotional abuse designed to plant seeds of self-doubt and alter the victim's perception of reality), on about January 23, 2017.

During the December 2016 and January 2017 time frame, Ms. Monahan talked to friends about her relationship with Mr. Ellison. These witnesses stated the following:

- One long-time friend stated that in late 2016, Ms. Monahan contacted him because she was upset and wanted help getting her things from Mr. Ellison's house. This friend said Ms. Monahan told him about the incident of Mr. Ellison trying to drag her off the bed, and expressed that she was scared of Mr. Ellison. He said while she discussed the altercation, the primary subject was asking him to assist her in retrieving her things from Mr. Ellison's house.
- Another friend who lives in Ms. Monahan's apartment building and met her for the first time when she moved there in late October 2016, stated that in about a month of Ms. Monahan moving in, Ms. Monahan described the incident to her. She recalled Ms. Monahan stating that Mr. Ellison "asked her to do a chore and then cursed at her and pulled her to the bottom of the bed." This friend recalls discussing the alleged emotional abuse, which the friend thought was "a bigger deal" than the physical altercation.
- Another individual who had been friends with both Mr. Ellison and Ms. Monahan for several years and has lived with Ms. Monahan, stated that Ms. Monahan told her "the entire story including the incident on the bed" in January 2017. This friend, considered "more important" than the bed altercation the "years of gaslighting and cheating" described by Ms. Monahan.
- Another long-time friend of both parties met with Ms. Monahan in late December 2016 or early January 2017. She described Ms. Monahan as overwrought and incoherent, talking at length about Mr. Ellison being a narcissist. This friend recalled Ms. Monahan mentioning "the last night we were together" where she was on the bed with her headphones on and Mr. Ellison kept telling her to get out and that she had to be out when he got back from a trip. According to this witness, Ms. Monahan did not mention the allegation that Mr. Ellison pulled on her leg while she was on the bed. This friend viewed the situation as a "bad breakup and a messy end of a relationship." In May or June 2017, this friend met again with Ms. Monahan and again was concerned for her mental state. She thought Ms. Monahan was "obsessing" about Mr. Ellison being a narcissist. This friend decided she needed to disconnect from Ms. Monahan. She became upset when she saw Austin Monahan's post of August 11, 2018 because she believed it to be false and unfair to Mr. Ellison.
- A supervisor at Ms. Monahan's work was aware of "chaos" during the break-up of Ms. Monahan and Mr. Ellison and observed gradual changes in Ms. Monahan: losing focus, having difficulty communicating clearly, isolating herself, and being unable to set boundaries. The supervisor had frequent contact with Ms. Monahan

and Ms. Monahan confided in her on a personal level. The supervisor did not recall Ms. Monahan telling her about the alleged incident, however. She believes she first learned about the alleged physical abuse when it became public in August 2018.

In March 2017, Ms. Monahan contacted a close colleague of Mr. Ellison very upset about the alleged cheating and the fact that she had found text messages on his phone to and from other women. They spoke for approximately 1½ hours by phone. The colleague said he realized Ms. Monahan was “fishing” for information as to Mr. Ellison’s alleged infidelities. Ms. Monahan was incensed that Mr. Ellison had moved on romantically with MH and later sent this colleague a text about how old MH was. The colleague was also concerned at this time about Ms. Monahan’s mental health. The colleague stated that Ms. Monahan never mentioned abuse or the incident during this long phone conversation. He stated that he had spent a lot of time with Mr. Ellison and Ms. Monahan and observed “lots of verbal arguments” between them and lots of “cursing.”

After January 15 and throughout 2017, Ms. Monahan and Mr. Ellison kept in fairly regular contact. They communicated frequently about setting up times for Ms. Monahan to either retrieve her things from Mr. Ellison’s house or for Mr. Ellison to deliver them to her. The two also met in person on several occasions to discuss and process their relationship. Ms. Monahan describes this entire year as her effort to offer Mr. Ellison “restorative justice,” “a way for Mr. Ellison to get the help he needs.” Mr. Ellison eventually felt that these meetings were not resolving anything and there was no point in continuing them.

Ms. Monahan often texted Mr. Ellison about narcissism and narcissist abuse. She told Mr. Ellison that she had “read three books, listened to 100s of podcast[s], read 100s of articles,” joined a “quantum freedom healing recovery program,” as well as group therapy and individual counseling specializing in narcissism abuse. She sent Mr. Ellison numerous text messages opining at length on their relationship and the ways in which she felt his narcissistic personality had impacted and traumatized her.

Many of Mr. Ellison’s responses to Ms. Monahan’s texts accusing him of narcissism were conciliatory. In one text, Mr. Ellison said he had read and watched all of the videos she had sent him [presumably video regarding narcissist abuse] and though he did not see how the “narcissism thing fits me,” he would seriously consider all of it. In other texts he apologized for saying unkind things, for “his part” and for letting her down, but maintained that he was a small part in all the things she has gone through that have caused her pain. Ms. Monahan was unrelenting in her accusations that he had caused her PTSD because of the “gaslighting, lies, manipulation, abuse.” She told him she wanted “restorative justice.” Eventually, Mr. Ellison asked her to leave him alone, move on and go their separate ways. At other times during 2017, however, Mr. Ellison would send Ms. Monahan text messages reminiscing about fond memories of them together at various places and expressing that he missed her and had made a mistake asking her to go. When asked about these texts, Mr. Ellison stated that he had been very much in love with Ms. Monahan, and he sought to “get on a cordial footing” with her, but did not want to get back together with her and by the end of 2017 was trying to avoid her.

With respect to Austin Monahan's statement that he had seen texts from Mr. Ellison that would "bully her, and threaten her if she went public," I believe that refers to a text in May 2017 which states:

No one can stop you from printing your thoughts about whatever in a diary. But Karen I cannot allow you to publish material about me. You may not publish material about our relationship Karen. I mean it. Please don't make me prove to you that I am serious. Don't do this. It violates my privacy. Just like when you stole my phone and read everything, took screen shots, shared them widely. You my [sic] stop this. Why can't you just move on.

Mr. Ellison explained that his statement "don't make me prove to you that I'm serious," referred to him contemplating legal action.

On October 29, 2017, Ms. Monahan sent Mr. Ellison a long text message stating, "I actually know a person who couldn't deal with being treated normal in a relationship ... and went out looking for admiration and 'specialness.'" The text went on for four phone screens opining in the third person about how this "person" would act. In the middle of this text message, Ms. Monahan wrote: "They were pathological liars, they tried to grab them by the leg, drag them off the bed and tell them to get the fuck out, they would have a rage that was due to a psychotic breakdown, when they would get caught in lies. ..." Mr. Ellison responded, "Um hm interesting. I think I understand the whole picture now. Karen, how come you can't simply say, no Keith that doesn't fit me. I don't identify with what you describe?" On December 17, 2017, Ms. Monahan wrote another text that begins, "Keith, We never discussed –the video I have of you trying to drag me off the bed, yelling get the fuck out now, calling me a bitch and saying I hate you bitch." The message continues for several phone-screen lengths. There is no response and Mr. Ellison does not recall reading the December 17 text message or seeing any reference to "trying to drag me off the bed" or a video. He said he would sometimes not read her lengthy text messages and believes he would remember it if he had seen Ms. Monahan's reference to having a video of that alleged conduct.

On December 31, 2017, Ms. Monahan wrote a letter to MH, Mr. Ellison's current girlfriend. In that letter, Ms. Monahan told MH that she had "impacted [Ms. Monahan's] personal life journey"; she questioned MH's motives for interjecting herself into Ms. Monahan's relationship with Mr. Ellison, and stated that MH had not considered Mr. Ellison's well-being and how he and his family would be "hurt and impacted negatively" by her actions. "But you didn't take that into account. You thought of your needs, what you wanted, your desires and it didn't matter who it hurt." She ended the letter with the following quotes: "For a while the fools mischief taste sweet, sweet as honey. But in the end it turns bitter. And how bitterly he/she suffers." "If you are happy at the expense of another man's/woman's happiness, you are forever bound." "To understand everything is to forgive everything."

At some point Mr. Ellison blocked Ms. Monahan on his phone, but later unblocked her number. In March 2018, Ms. Monahan sent Mr. Ellison copies of texts she claimed were from her friends making derogatory comments about MH's age and appearance. In May 2018, she texted Mr. Ellison that she had run out of gas and he left a meeting and brought her some.

On Sunday June 3, 2018, Ms. Monahan texted Mr. Ellison, asking him to meet with her to discuss the legal case of a friend's daughter who was in prison. She wanted to meet between Sunday and Wednesday before she left on a trip to Texas. Mr. Ellison agreed and they met the evening of Monday June 4, 2018 at a Caribou Coffee at the Knollwood Mall. According to Ms. Monahan, the topic of the meeting quickly changed from discussing her friend to Mr. Ellison asking her how long she was going to send out tweets about narcissism, stating he did not want to "keep looking over his shoulder" and she was ruining his career. Ms. Monahan then said something to the effect of "This is not about you. You know what you did to me, you put your hands on me." Mr. Ellison stated "I don't remember it going that way." Ms. Monahan then said "Are you serious? I have a video!" and Mr. Ellison responded, "Show me." Ms. Monahan says she just walked away, got into her car, and left.

Mr. Ellison acknowledged that during the meeting on June 4 he asked Ms. Monahan why she calls him a narcissist all the time on social media and told her it is harmful to him to put all of that out there publicly. He said Ms. Monahan then asked him, "How's [MH]?" to which he replied, "what's it matter?" According to Mr. Ellison, Ms. Monahan then said "you know I have a tape." He said, "let me see it"; she said "no" and walked away.

The next day, June 5, Mr. Ellison filed to run for Attorney General. Ms. Monahan acknowledged she was aware at the time she requested the meeting that Mr. Ellison was considering running for Attorney General. She admits Mr. Ellison's act of placing his name in the race was a triggering point for her as it "screamed entitlement." She said she realized restorative justice was never going to happen and, after struggling with "fear versus speaking out" for a long time, she decided she was finally ready to tell her story. She had "taken agency" and knew she needed to speak out for other survivors of abuse. Ms. Monahan said she had been contacted previously by a reporter in response to her tweets about narcissist abuse but had not responded; after the June 4 meeting and his June 5 filing, she decided to contact the press and started working with CNN to tell her story. At the same time, Ms. Monahan told me she does not believe her allegations against Mr. Ellison disqualify him from being Attorney General and she "is okay with him winning."

Ms. Monahan began treatment with a psychologist on June 6, 2018.⁷ The therapy notes from that date (disclosed with Ms. Monahan's consent) indicate that Ms. Monahan told her therapist Mr. Ellison was a narcissist and cheated with multiple women. The notes further indicate: "incident – dragged her out of bed yelling 'fuck you bitch' 'I hate you' kids saw on video"

Ms. Monahan states that sometime in mid-2017, her sons borrowed her laptop and found a folder on her desktop where she had saved the video of the incident along with numerous text messages and tweets from and regarding Mr. Ellison. According to Ms. Monahan, at that time she was still in the process of healing and was not ready for her story to be made public, so she urged her sons not to tell anyone and they reluctantly kept silent. After her sons had seen the materials

⁷ Ms. Monahan had sought medical treatment for anemia in November 2017. The medical records reflect that she stated at that appointment that she had been subjected to "emotional and physical abuse" by a partner in a former relationship, whom she identified as Congressman Ellison, but contained no details regarding the alleged physical abuse.

on her computer, she alleges she saved them to a flash drive and packed it in a box that is now in storage along with about 100 boxes at her ex-husband's house. Ms. Monahan stated that this summer, when her son Austin knew she was ready to speak publicly, he wanted to "jump out ahead" and made the Facebook post on August 11. Ms. Monahan said she was shocked that he mentioned the video as she had never planned to release either the video or the text messages when she told her story. She had not planned to "prove" her story with corroboration beyond her own word. Once Austin made the post, however, she went into "mom mode" and felt she needed to confirm the existence of the video so that he was not "left out to dry." In her public interviews, Ms. Monahan has provided different reasons for not releasing the video. She has stated that it was misplaced, that it is too embarrassing and traumatic, that it is on a flash drive packed away in boxes in storage, and that she should not have to prove that she is telling the truth. I offered to view the video privately but Ms. Monahan ultimately refused to allow me to see it.

V. FACTUAL FINDINGS

I have been asked to make a determination as to whether the physical incident alleged by Ms. Monahan can be substantiated. This determination involves weighing all of the evidence described above as well as assessing the credibility of the witnesses involved. It is important to clarify the scope of the evidence considered to make that determination. In 2006, another woman, Amy Alexander, accused Mr. Ellison of grabbing her and threatening her. Mr. Ellison denied those allegations. At the time, the Star Tribune investigated the allegations, including interviewing witnesses identified by Alexander, but the paper was unable to corroborate her claims. A court granted Ellison a restraining order against Alexander in June 2005 based on allegations that she was harassing him, and denied a similar request by Alexander. Several facts uncovered during the Star Tribune's investigation called into serious doubt the credibility and motives of Ms. Alexander. Given the lack of reliability around the twelve-year-old allegation by Ms. Alexander, issues relating to that relationship or her allegation were not considered and thus do not support any suggestion of a pattern of conduct.

In contrast to those allegations, Mr. Ellison's ex-wife, Kim Ellison, publicly stated, "I want members of our community to know that the behavior described does not match the character of the Keith I know." I interviewed Ms. Ellison and she firmly stated that Mr. Ellison had never engaged in any abuse, physical or otherwise, "before, during, or after" their twenty-five-year marriage. I also sought to review the divorce records of Keith and Kim Ellison, which are the subject of a subpoena issued by the Star Tribune. Mr. Ellison's attorney, Carla Kjellberg, responded that they could not share those records as Mr. Ellison is currently in process of moving to seal the records based on the privacy concerns of both parties; sharing those records with me, a third party, would likely defeat Mr. Ellison's ability to ask that the records remain sealed. Ms. Kjellberg represented to me that Mr. Ellison denies that the divorce records contain any allegation of abuse against him. Further, as part of his motion, Mr. Ellison will request the court to review the divorce records *in camera* and ask the court to publicly disclose any allegation against Mr. Ellison of any kind of abuse mentioned in those records. Beyond Kim Ellison's statement, therefore, I was not able to consider other evidence regarding that relationship which might be contained in the divorce records. I also did not probe into any past relationships of Ms. Monahan, and focus my findings on the relationship between Mr. Ellison and Ms. Monahan.

Ms. Monahan is ardent in her belief⁸ that she was a victim of Mr. Ellison's alleged manipulation and infidelity and wants now to tell her story and help other survivors. Although focused primarily on the alleged infidelity and "gaslighting," she is unwavering in her claim that the alleged physical altercation occurred, describing it with a high level of specificity and detail, which lends credibility to the allegation. Her allegation that during the incident Mr. Ellison screamed "get the fuck out of my house," and said she'd "better be out by the time he came home," shares a common theme with Mr. Ellison's statement that during the argument the night of August 25 he raised the issue that she needed to find another place to live. He states that she became angry and said, "You're kicking me out?!"

Ms. Monahan admits she did not immediately tell anyone about the alleged incident, other than to tell a friend that she and Mr. Ellison had a fight and she felt like "the lowest of the low." The delay in reporting is common in abuse victims. Ms. Monahan's disclosure to friends in December 2016 and January 2017 that Mr. Ellison had subjected her to emotional and physical abuse roughly corresponds to the time period when Ms. Monahan, considering them in a monogamous relationship, began to discover that Mr. Ellison was seeing other women, which validated her long-standing suspicions. The fact that Ms. Monahan spoke to several people about the incident four or five months after it supposedly occurred – and a year and a half before the public release of the allegations – lends credibility to them. Some of the witnesses considered the emotional abuse described by Ms. Monahan as more significant than the allegation of physical abuse. Ms. Monahan's witnesses all stated emphatically that they believe Ms. Monahan. One witness also knows Ms. Monahan's son Austin and vouched for his credibility.

Ms. Monahan also referenced the alleged incident in two text messages to Mr. Ellison in late 2017, although she did not claim to have raised or discussed the alleged incident with him at any point for over a year after it allegedly occurred on August 26, 2016. One message on October 29, 2017, purporting to describe the characteristics of some third "person" but clearly directed at Mr. Ellison, included the following sentence: "they tried to grab them by the leg, drag them off the bed and tell them to get the fuck out." On December 17, 2017 Ms. Monahan texted: "Keith, We never discussed –the video I have of you trying to drag me off the bed, yelling get the fuck out now, calling me a bitch and saying I hate you bitch."

In addition, Ms. Monahan reported physical abuse and/or the alleged incident to two doctors. On November 28, 2017, Ms. Monahan sought treatment for the primary complaint of anemia. In that examination she stated that she was in a "very stressful environment for years, emotional and physical abuse by a partner with whom she is now separated" and identified Mr. Ellison as the partner. She admitted in this examination that she had never had physical injuries that required a physical examination in the past. She provided no details regarding the allegation of "physical abuse" and there were other sections of the medical records that were not shared with me. On June 6, 2018, Ms. Monahan started treating with a psychologist. The notes from that

⁸ Qualifying Ms. Monahan's allegation about Mr. Ellison's infidelity as her belief and her perception does not suggest that Ms. Monahan's deeply held feelings of betrayal by Mr. Ellison are not valid or warranted based on her understanding of their relationship at that time. But it is beyond the scope of this investigation to resolve whether Mr. Ellison's admitted relationships with other women at that time constituted infidelity.

session indicate Ms. Monahan reported that Mr. Ellison “dragged her out of bed yelling “fuck you bitch,” “I hate you.” While this later set of treatment notes specifically reference the alleged incident, they reflect an inconsistent depiction of the allegation, i.e. that Mr. Ellison “dragged her out of bed.” Ms. Monahan’s first treatment with a psychologist was June 6, 2018 – two days after she requested a meeting with Mr. Ellison and one day after he formally announced his run for Attorney General, which Ms. Monahan admits angered her because it “screamed entitlement.”

On the other side, Mr. Ellison was credible in his denial of the allegations and truly seemed not to recall the incident ever happening. He presented as sincere in his shock, hurt, and disbelief that Ms. Monahan would make these allegations against him. I recognize that Mr. Ellison has strong motives to deny these allegations, but also that it is difficult to prove that something did not occur. Mr. Ellison painted a convincing picture of Ms. Monahan as being suspicious, questioning, and aggressively accusing him of lying and cheating. Mr. Ellison described his response on August 25 after Ms. Monahan had accused him of lying and cheating as fairly rational – he admitted lying and realized they needed to break up because she didn’t trust him and he could not be truthful with her. During his interview, Mr. Ellison acknowledged it was a tough and emotional moment, and that his voice “matched her voice,” but denied they were yelling. In contrast, Ms. Monahan described him as slowly seething in the face of the confrontation until he flew into a rage. A mutual friend who had talked to both parties understood the breakup to be ugly and messy. Another mutual friend who has known both parties for years said she had seen Mr. Ellison be “crabby and dismissive” but never exhibit uncontrolled anger or rage. Kim Ellison denied that he had ever engaged in any physical abuse during their 25-year marriage.

Also supporting Mr. Ellison’s denial of the allegations is the fact that Ms. Monahan left at his home a notebook with her personal notes made on January 2, 2017. The entire notebook is filled with a “therapeutic” type of writing. It is written to herself, “Dear Karen,” and starts with the phrase “Have integrity” repeated several times, and contains positive affirmations to “stay stronger than any pain,” etc. The notes opine about her healing process and the pain and hurt she suffered, and chronicle the breakdown of the relationship. In this journal, Ms. Monahan mentions Mr. Ellison’s infidelities and MH specifically and says “I will not take her to a back alley and box the living shit out of her old ass.” She also writes, “Keith is a good person and I know this from my core. I have no place to judge him because I have done the same thing.” The journal does not mention the alleged incident of physical abuse. I asked Ms. Monahan why the notes did not reference the incident and she indicated that they were just notes of her healing process. She did not believe the absence of the reference signified anything. In my view, the notes confirm what Ms. Monahan’s friends believed, that the primary issue was the emotional damage allegedly inflicted by Mr. Ellison (and she inconsistently raised the allegation about the physical incident). Indeed, the central focus of Ms. Monahan’s statements to me as well as the vast majority of evidence she provided to me relates to her mounting suspicion in late 2016 and eventual discovery in January 2017 that Mr. Ellison was involved in intimate relationships with other women at the same time she believed she and Mr. Ellison were still together. Again, without intending to diminish these allegations, it is simply beyond the scope of this report to resolve the causes of Ms. Monahan’s emotional state.

Mr. Ellison insists that he did not cheat during the relationship but admits he was romantically involved with two other women (one of whom is his current girlfriend MH) in late

2016 and early 2017 when he and Ms. Monahan were not officially together but were still exploring reconciliation. Mr. Ellison believes Ms. Monahan could not accept that he moved on to another serious relationship so quickly, as evidenced by Ms. Monahan's letter to MH and continual references to her as recently as their meeting on June 4, 2018 when she allegedly asked "How's [MH]" before mentioning the video. He feels this jealousy and belief that he was not faithful to her is motivating the current allegations.

The timing of the public release of Ms. Monahan's allegations is also a factor that must be considered in assessing the credibility of the parties. Ms. Monahan's son posted the allegations regarding Mr. Ellison three days prior to the primary election, inevitably creating suspicion as to the motive behind the disclosure. In his August 11 post, Austin Monahan tagged Debra Hillstrom, Mr. Ellison's opponent in the Attorney General primary, which could suggest some political motive. Additionally, Ms. Monahan admittedly contacted Mr. Ellison two days before the filing deadline in the Attorney General's race to seek a meeting. The meeting occurred the day before the filing deadline and Ms. Monahan mentioned the existence of a video at that meeting. Ms. Monahan denies the timing was politically motivated, explaining that after more than a year of working on her healing process, she was finally ready to tell her story and her son came out with it first to show his support. She has said "no time would be a good time." But Ms. Monahan also admitted that she struggled with the timing vis a vis the election and made a conscious decision not to go public just ahead of a general election. She admitted Mr. Ellison's filing for Attorney General triggered her decision to move forward with publicizing her story.

Finally, last but certainly not least is the alleged videotape. According to Austin Monahan, the video is almost two minutes long and "showed Keith Ellison dragging my mama off the bed by her feet." But based on Ms. Monahan's description of the alleged incident, it is unclear what was recorded for two full minutes. And as discussed above, Ms. Monahan does not allege she was dragged off the bed. Thus, Mr. Monahan's account of what he viewed on the video at least appears inconsistent with the actual conduct alleged. But neither Austin Monahan, nor Justin Monahan who was also said to have viewed the tape, would make themselves available for an interview to explain and potentially clarify these possible discrepancies.

As discussed above, Ms. Monahan's articulated reasons for not releasing the videotape have shifted throughout her public interviews. She has stated that the videotape is embarrassing and traumatizing for her, and that she should not have to "prove" her allegations with a tape. She has also said the video is misplaced, and saved onto a flash drive packed somewhere in boxes in storage at her ex-husband's house. I asked Ms. Monahan to allow me to view the videotape and assured her I would not share the tape with anyone or release it publicly. As I told Ms. Monahan, the withholding of a videotape that she has affirmatively represented to exist as proof her allegations necessarily creates doubt around her allegation.⁹

Nonetheless, Ms. Monahan ultimately refused to show me the video, stating that she has been bullied on social media over the videotape and has decided not to cave to the pressure. With

⁹ Prior to the release of this report, I was instructed to contact Ms. Monahan again to provide her a final opportunity to allow me to privately view the videotape. Ms. Monahan did not return my text message or email sent on September 26, 2018.

respect to Ms. Monahan's assertion that women should be believed and should not have to prove their allegations, I certainly agree that women (and men) subject to abuse should be able to come forward without fear of retribution and that all such claims should be taken seriously and investigated. But an allegation standing alone is not necessarily sufficient to conclude that conduct occurred, particularly where the accusing party declines to produce supporting evidence that she herself asserts exists. The accusing party's statement must be evaluated in light of the available evidence, including the accused party's response, a credibility assessment of both parties and any witnesses, and corroborating evidence if it exists.

Here, Ms. Monahan has affirmatively represented that a videotape of an incident – not witnessed by anyone else – exists and proves her allegations are true. Ms. Monahan contends it was her son, without her knowledge and permission, who first disclosed the existence of a videotape and she never intended to publicly release the tape. Inconsistent with that explanation, however, Ms. Monahan herself has raised the videotape multiple times. She referenced it in a text message to Mr. Ellison in December 2017. She mentioned it to him on June 4, 2018. She referenced it in her session with her psychologist on June 6, 2018. She has stated on social media and to news outlets that a video exists. She has thus repeatedly placed the existence of the video front and center to her allegations, but then has refused to disclose it. My offer to privately view the video dispenses with one of her reasons for withholding it, the embarrassment and trauma of public disclosure. While I understand Ms. Monahan's rationale of not wanting to succumb to the bullying and pressure to prove her story, I nonetheless find that dangling dispositive proof of a serious allegation of physical abuse and then withholding it from the investigator unavoidably creates doubt about the allegation. Even assuming the video exists, I question whether it would verify the events exactly as Ms. Monahan has described them, and whether there is something on the video that she does not want to be revealed.

In conclusion, while it is clear that the relationship between Ms. Monahan and Mr. Ellison was tumultuous and Ms. Monahan has suffered emotionally, the only question that this report was asked to address is whether there is sufficient evidence to substantiate a claim of physical abuse. While the specificity of the allegation, the corroboration of Ms. Monahan's allegation by three of her friends several months later, and Ms. Monahan's reference to this incident several times over the past year and a half weigh in support of such a finding, questions about Ms. Monahan and her son's account of the incident, the timing of the allegations throughout the two-year period since it allegedly occurred, and Mr. Ellison's vehement denial weigh against such a finding. Ms. Monahan claims to possess evidence that could conclusively corroborate her allegation as well as potentially answer all of the questions surrounding it, if it occurred, but Ms. Monahan has chosen to withhold that evidence. That the accusing party claims to have but refuses to provide key, dispositive evidence that the accused has flatly denied, causes me to conclude that the allegation is unsubstantiated.