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House Order, That the House Committee on Ethics Convene To Consider the Speaker's Actions with Regard to Former Representative Dillon Bates

WHEREAS, Representative Dillon Bates of Westbrook was the subject of a report in a story published in a monthly Portland publication that alleges that Representative Bates had engaged in inappropriate behavior with several female students while he was in a supervisory capacity as a drama teacher at the Maine Girls' Academy in Portland; and

WHEREAS, on August 3, 2018, Speaker of the House Sara Gideon publicly called for the resignation from the House of Representatives of Representative Bates, citing the published report; and

WHEREAS, Speaker Gideon, through her spokesperson, has acknowledged that she was made aware of the allegations against Representative Bates "several months ago"; and

WHEREAS, it is unclear what information Speaker Gideon or others in the Speaker's office had and how long she or others had that information before the Speaker asked for Representative Bates's resignation; and

WHEREAS, it is not known whether anyone else in a leadership position in the House Democratic Office had information related to the allegations against Representative Bates; and

WHEREAS, Legislators have a moral and legal obligation to protect Maine people, particularly minor children and young women, from predatory sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS, if the allegations against Representative Bates are true, the actions represent a breach of the Legislative Code of Ethics and a significant breach of public trust; and

WHEREAS, Representative Bates, through his attorney, has called the allegations of sexual abuse "baseless"; and

WHEREAS, the allegations may have already caused irreparable harm to Representative Bates's reputation; and

WHEREAS, Representative Bates has now resigned; and

WHEREAS, whether that resignation was due to the report or the pressure to resign brought by the actions of Speaker Gideon is unknown; and

WHEREAS, in the United States of America, a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty and Representative Bates has due process rights and should not have been forced out of office based on unsubstantiated allegations; now, therefore, be it

ORDERED, that the actions taken by Speaker Gideon and others in the Speaker's office and leadership positions in the House of Representatives in relation to the allegations against Representative Bates be referred to the House Committee on Ethics for further investigation; and be it further

ORDERED, that the House Committee on Ethics report back to the House of Representatives with the results of its investigation, as well as any recommendations for action, no later than one month after the convening of the committee.