

## Committee On Health

### Issue: The Spreading of STDs

#### Issue Statement:

The spreading of STDs in the USVI is greatly affecting everyone in our community. The territory's rate of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, Chlamydia, and Gonorrhea are among the highest in the nation. In 2009, the positive rate for Chlamydia among 15 to 24 year olds was at 15.5 percent which was the highest in the nation. That same year the gonorrhea rates among the same group were at 2 percent ranking the fifth highest in the nation. Along with the previous stated statistics, the territories rates for HIV and AIDS per capita are also the second highest rates in the nation. The high numbers of infected Virgin Islanders show a lack of education and knowledge about the effects and spread of STDs. These skyrocketing statistics mainly occur among teens and young adults between the ages of 15 and 24.

#### Legislative Proposal:

To combat the high rates of STD infections in teens and young adults in the VI, prevention programs should be put in place in schools and other youth focused programs. With prevention programs in place, the rates of being infected with STDs will drop because the group with the highest infection rates (15 to 24 year olds) will become informed of the risks and effects that are associated with STDs. A bill geared toward STD awareness and education could decrease the numbers of individuals acquiring STDs. The details of this bill would be to train professionals to educate the students about STDs and provide prevention tools and tips. The government would have to attempt to acquire funding and support for the programs at each school and evaluate the program methods and effectiveness.

We call upon the Legislature of The US Virgin Islands to pass a bill for the above mentioned.

#### Supporting Argument:

Regardless of the wealth of information in support of STD prevention programs, some individuals such as health care professionals and government leaders might be in opposition of this bill. Health care professionals might disagree with this bill because it increases their workloads and responsibilities whereas government leaders might disagree with the amount of funds and effort that would have to go into this project. This viewpoint is mistaken because there are greater positive effects that would result from a bill such as this one. Putting this bill in place will decrease our territorial STD rates and allow for a better future for the future generations.