

SUCCEED, INC.

*St. Croix Unified for Community, Culture,
Environment & Economic Development*



(340)772-9685ph/fax
PO 1439 Kingshill, St Croix 00851
stxahead.succeed@gmail.com

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL No. 31-0079 June 29, 2015

Good Morning Chairman Jackson and Members of the Committee on Education, Youth and Culture. My name is Claudette Young Hinds and I am the President of SUCCEED Inc. We appreciate the opportunity to register support of Bill No. 31-0079. The points contained herein:

1) Who we are, and what we do related to this resolution, 2) UN Resolution 68/237, Bill 31-0079, and Cultural Wellness, and 3) Cultural Wellness, Education and Economic Development.

#1.SUCCEED Inc. in is a coalition of St. Croix organizations and individuals committed to culture and heritage as a cornerstone upon which wealth and cultural wellness may be built. Our name is the acronym for St Croix United for Community, Culture, Environment, and Economic Development. Founded in 2006 we also advocate the creation of a Maroon Sanctuary Park and legislation for a Heritage Enterprise Zone, and other action s that will stimulate appropriate and sustainable economic activities. The FACT sheet (attachment A) describes major activities, and identifies founding members reflects a true coalition: History, Culture and Tradition Foundation, CHANT, Per ANKH, SEA, Missionaries of the Soil, St Croix Hiking Assoc., the Nature Conservancy, Dr. Olaf Hendricks, Mike Walsh, Oceana James, Hortense Rowe, Paul Chakroff, Mary Moorhead, Onaje Jackson, Dr. Chenzira Kahina, Claudette Young Hinds, Carol B.Cramer, Olasee Davis, et al.

SUCCEED is pro development and pro jobs, and advocates what the American Planning Association refers to as “smart growth” in recognition that growth does not always constitute development. We were competitively selected to be the Coordinating Entity for the proposed St Croix National Heritage Area and believe that the Territory will reap substantial benefits as one of the 40 locally controlled/owned NHA’s that collectively pumped \$14.9 billion into the USA economy in 2014 through the activities of culture, heritage, and preservation-based businesses. SUCCEED and St Croix Landmarks endorsed each other’s proposal to be the CE and pledged to support whoever was selected because we are convinced of socio-economic benefits. The 28th Legislature approved Bill 28 -0152 A Resolution to Petition the Congress of the Unites States to designate St. Croix as a National Heritage Area. (NHA) While the federal bill was viewed favorably on both sides of the aisle, action was hampered by elections and national crises. We trust that it will be re-introduced by The Hon Delegate Plaskett. Designation as an NHA makes SUCCEED eligible to receive up to \$1 million/year for 10 years which we will re-grant to small businesses and organizations. The National Park Service Report on the St. Croix NHA received a National award for documenting what the 3 year community planning process revealed as an abundance of cultural, environmental, historic, and other resources that they believe should be shown to/known by the Nation.

2. UN Resolution 68/237; Bill 31-0079, and Cultural Wellness.

Cultural Wellness is a goal whose realization is long overdue for many people across the World. The UN’s previous decade –long campaigns have often had substantive results. And, while we applaud the concept, at base, we think that 10 years is far too short a time to focus on acknowledgement, celebration, and repair of the image and lives of those for whom the 400 year history of chattel slavery constitutes the footnote in a timeline of 10’s of thousands of years. However, we will never sacrifice what’s “good” in hopes of getting the “perfect”. We fully support this measure to have the 1st and 2nd Branches of Government jointly define and implement a blueprint for the education and recognition of Africans in the Caribbean diaspora. The cautionary tale is that absent a)well-structured initiatives(created “with” people not “for” people that are b)linked to b) defined objectives and metrics for measuring the impact of what is accomplished, and c)a dedicated fund account to sustain and institutionalize this work through curriculum, museums, archives, annual or bi-annual events.... absent “A,B, and C”, the passage of the Bill will have little or no impact on a cultural wellness that depends on knowledge, proactive spiritual and emotional healing , pride and self-esteem.

3. SUCCEED's longstanding Objectives and Bill 31-0079

Since 2011, SUCCEED has implemented initiatives that speak to the intent of the Bill as pertains to Maroon history, Cultural Wellness, and Culture/Heritage Economic Development

a) Maroon History:

- Our booklet “Maritime Marronage –St Croix to Puerto Rico 1734-1848” is the 1st to describe individual maroons and villages where they went; the Maroon Map/brochure identifies areas of maroon habitation across St.Croix..and there’s much more to be done!) “UreMein: Homeland,A documentary on the Carib-Garafuna history references the escape to St. Vincent by legions of enslaved Africans who survived unsuccessful revolts in their respective islands. Recent work by the NPS Network to Freedom documents Maroon/Native Americans travel routes from Florida to the Bahamas and Barbados. **In short, SUCCEED has begun piece together the story of the Caribbean’s “underground Railroad” . Regional collaboration on research, publications, conferences and other events could be expanded with passage of the Bill.**
- Our literature states that “*The maroon cultural legacy is Crucian ..the Maroon Spiritual legacy is Universal*”. In 2007 and in 2012, we were joined by representatives of Maroons communities from Jamaica, Puerto, and the Gullah region. We also note the work of the African Heritage Diaspora Trail, launched in Bermuda a decade ago to uncover and link histories, and celebrate the legacy and contributions of Africans throughout the diaspora. **The USVI would be remiss if we did not take an active, even leadership role in this global initiative. Bill 31-0079 could be an important element in assuming an important position in these endeavors**
- In 2012,13 and 14 Proclamations were issued by the USVI Governor re: Maroon Commemorative Events that have included Symposium attended by VI Culture Bearers, officials of the Gullah Geechee, Jamaica Maroon and Seminole/Maroon nations, Interfaith Spiritual Remembrance at Maroon Ridge, Roundtable discussion at UVI, Briefing and Tour/hike for members of the 30th^d Legislature and more. **Regional and National outreach and impact: scholarly, cultural, and economic – would likely be enhanced by activities that would develop under this Bill**
- National Park Service recent recognition of St Croix as part of Network to Freedom is significant.

b) Cultural Wellness and Education supported by Bill 31-0079

- Through research, and dialogue, people of the Caribbean will find strong similarities and in cultural practices. games, songs, dances, rhythms, stories, foods, health remedies
- Continued research/publications that uncover and “humanize” the maroon legacy as well as inventions and other contributions, Past and present
- This Bill may support resolution of a 30 year effort to provide adequate education in VI history and Caribbean culture. The Writ of Mandamus for Act 4844 to instruct all students in public schools in VI history and Basic Caribbean history is active, along with a Petition that the people are signing supporting the position that what is in place is insufficient
- Dr. Alfred Anduze’s self-published papers on Caribbean Healing Plants and remedies are one example of the kind of scholarly, cultural work that would benefit from Bill 31 -0079.

C) Culture and Heritage Business Development

- “Preserve, Promote and Prosper” a blueprint for Culture and Heritage -based Economic development (2013) was the outcome of community education series (250 participants) and planning process in which more than 80 business or potential business owners outlined their interest in/connection to Geotourism businesses, and identified their specific needs for technical /financial assistance, new/revised public policy and processes, or financial support – in order to develop and succeed. Businesses related to education, history, culinary/literary/healing arts etc. were identified. The CHEED document was distributed to the Legislature, heads of Executive branch agencies, private sector and community groups. And will be the reference for our funding requests under the STX NHA, DOI or other sources.

In CONCLUSION: The benefit of a measure backed by the 1st and 2nd branches of Government are both tangible and intangible: Collaborative development and approval of projects and a statement to the people that elected officials CAN work together for the common Good. We would welcome an opportunity to brief you on our initiatives and vision. Thank you.