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Jannett Millin Young
Chairperson
Economic Development,
Agriculture and Planning
US Virgin Islands

Dear Senator Millin Young:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony on the reenacted STARS Act legislation, bill No. 31-0009.

As founder of the VI private sector film industry (in 1979), I am writing to support the intention of this bill to revitalize and expand our ability to attract "the audio and music video recording, motion picture, and television industries and related media productions to the Virgin Islands."

To this end, the STARS Act spells out a comprehensive series of incentives designed to attract the kinds of entertainment productions that will help us re-build and grow our local support industry.

We have in the past, with the help of the Film Promotion Office, had a vibrant film industry. I recruited and trained dozens of local crew who worked on many kinds of productions. We hired many local suppliers, including taxi drivers and truck drivers for the duration of the production, casting directors and assistants, actors, extras, models and principle models, make up and hair styling artists, wardrobe buyers and stylists, electricians, grips, camera assistants and 2nd unit photographers for scenic shots, videographers, prop masters and carpenters to build sets, production assistants, marine and diving coordinators, caterers, boat captains and helicopter pilots.

Some of the crew, with this experience, went on to work with productions in the States and throughout the Caribbean.

There was a noticeable bump in the island economy and people's spending patterns when an extra $2 or $3 million dollars a year was circulated as the result of movies, TV series and pilots, music videos and TV commercials. Our mission at the time was to provide service that was "Better Than Hollywood." And we had a team who did!

Sadly, we have lost the depth of experienced crew we once had because of lack of business. But it can be regained.

Today, with the support of the present Film Promotion office, we appear poised to reclaim a new version of our earlier success.

Today it is abundantly clear that incentives are a major part of what the industry considers when choosing their locations. We have fallen behind the curve by not offering tax or other kinds of incentives. The Virgin Islands and its beautiful locations are no longer competitive as entertainment industry destinations. That's a big reason why our own local industry has suffered.

Until recently, I have spent the last several years in Rhode Island. I watched as new incentive programs were debated and eventually passed by the local legislature. Since then, the film industry in that small state has grown exponentially, along with the crew base, location service sector and significant national news coverage.

We might not like to play this incentive game, but it is clear that if we want to re-grow our Virgin Islands location film industry, this is the relatively small investment we must make. It is the only way we will earn the payback offered us by the entertainment business: increased revenue, new employment opportunities, and the accompanying priceless publicity that comes when star actors and directors walk our streets.

Entertainment production brings new money to the islands without adding any strain to our infrastructure. The benefits are many, even when the Virgin Islands are not specifically named. The more locations we can double for, the more business we can attract and the more credible we become as a production destination.

We must be ready to promote the islands aggressively as an experienced production center. We must be ready to compete from strength. And we must have a "Better Than Hollywood" local crew and equipment base ready to serve, which cannot happen unless we have sufficient in-coming productions and/or long-term island-based productions to support them.

Thank you for considering the renewed STARS Act legislation, and thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully yours,

Gail Noble Glanville
Founder and Former Owner
Sunbow Location Services

Cc: Senator Clifford F. Graham