VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony

BEFORE THE 36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS' COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2026 | **10:00 A.M.**

During Block II of the agenda, the Committee will meet to consider

BR26-1324

An act amending Official Zoning Map No. SCZ-11 to rezone Parcel Nos. 5-A and 5-C VI Corp Land (Estate Castle Burke), Prince Quarter, St. Croix from A-I (Agricultural) to P (Public) (Zoning Application #CCZP0055-26).

Presented by:

DR. DIONNE WELLS-HEDRINGTON, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education
Virgin Islands Department of Education

Setting Records,
Breaking Barriers,
Becoming Five Stars

Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D.
Commissioner

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF
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November 9, 2026

Honorable Milton E. Potter, Senate President
Committee of the Whole
Capitol Building
Post Office Box 1690
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

Sent electronically via mpotter@legvi.org

Dear Senate President Potter,

I sincerely appreciate your continued support and commitment to advancing the interests of our students and strengthening education throughout the Territory.

Thank you for the opportunity afforded to the Virgin Islands Department of Education to provide testimony before the Committee of the Whole of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands on **Monday, November 9, 2026**, during Block II of the agenda, regarding **Bill No. BR26-1324**.
The proposed measure seeks to amend Official Zoning Map No. SCZ-11 to rezone Parcel Nos. 5-A and 5-C, VI Corp Land (Estate Castle Burke), Prince Quarter, St. Croix, from A-I (Agricultural) to P (Public), pursuant to Zoning Application #CCZP0055-26.

Enclosed for your review and consideration is the Department's testimony and accompanying documentation, which outlines the Department's position and provides relevant information concerning the proposed zoning amendment and its implications for public education
.
We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this legislative process and remain committed to working collaboratively with the 36th Legislature in support of initiatives that advance the Department's mission and the educational interests of our Territory.

Thank you once again for your continued leadership and consideration. We remain available to provide any additional information or clarification the Committee may require.

Respectfully,

Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D.
Commissioner

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Introduction

Commissioner's Statement

Good morning, Senate President Potter, members of the 36th Legislature, distinguished senators, and all those joining us in person and through the various viewing and listening platforms.

I am Chaneel Callwood, Virgin Islands Department of Education Architect, here on behalf of the Commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Education Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee of the Whole to provide testimony on **Bill No. BR26-1324**, concerning the proposed amendment to Official Zoning Map No. SCZ-11 to rezone Parcels 5-A and 5-C, VI Corp Land (Estate Castle Burke), Prince Quarter, St. Croix, from A-I (Agricultural) to P (Public).

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide its perspective on this proposed measure and to engage in meaningful dialogue with Legislature as we continue working toward advancing public education and meeting the needs of our students, educators, and the broader Virgin Islands community.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to our discussion and welcome any questions from the members of the Legislature.

Background and Purpose of the Rezoning

The St. Croix Educational Complex is an established public educational facility serving the students and families of St. Croix.

The property, identified as Parcel Nos. 5-A and 5-C VI Corp Land (Estate Castle Burke), Prince Quarter, St. Croix, is currently designated A-1 (Agricultural) under Official Zoning Map No. SCZ-11.

Although the property has been developed and utilized for public educational purposes, its existing Agricultural zoning classification does not appropriately reflect its current function or intended long-term use.

Accordingly, the Virgin Islands Department of Education seeks to amend the zoning designation from A-1 (Agricultural) to P (Public).

The proposed rezoning is intended to establish a land-use classification consistent with the property's existing public educational function and VIDE's long-term plans for the site.

Justification for the Proposed Rezoning

The primary purpose of this rezoning request is to ensure that the existing and proposed uses of the St. Croix Educational Complex comply with the Virgin Islands Zoning Law.

First, the proposed rezoning will establish zoning consistency.

The property currently functions as a public educational facility. Rezoning the property to P (Public) will establish a zoning designation consistent with its existing use and intended public purpose.

Second, the proposed rezoning will provide long-term land-use certainty.

Rezoning the subject parcels to P (Public) will allow the existing and proposed uses permitted within that classification to be established as uses by right, subject to applicable laws and regulatory requirements.

This will provide greater certainty for the Department's continued operation, maintenance, improvement, and future development of the educational facility.

Furthermore, the Public zoning designation will remain applicable to the property unless subsequently amended through the appropriate legal process, thereby providing a consistent land-use framework for future educational infrastructure planning.

Third, the proposed rezoning will accommodate permissible public uses.

In addition to supporting the existing educational facilities, rezoning the property to P (Public) will authorize the land to be utilized for any or all purposes permitted within the Public zoning classification, subject to applicable development standards and permitting requirements.

This designation will provide flexibility for the Department to respond to future educational and public infrastructure needs.

Alignment with VIDE's Educational Infrastructure Initiatives

The Virgin Islands Department of Education continues to advance efforts to improve, modernize, and strengthen public educational facilities throughout the Territory.

These initiatives include the repair, replacement, and redevelopment of educational infrastructure affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as improvements necessary to provide safe, resilient, and functional learning environments.

Establishing the appropriate zoning classification for the St. Croix Educational Complex is an important component of responsible infrastructure planning.

The proposed rezoning will provide the appropriate land-use framework for existing educational operations and future improvements, while supporting compliance with applicable territorial planning and development requirements.

The Department recognizes that the rezoning process is separate from other required regulatory approvals and will continue to comply with applicable environmental, construction, and permitting requirements as future development activities proceed.

Public Benefit and Long-term Land Use

The St. Croix Educational Complex represents an important public investment in the Territory's educational infrastructure.

The requested zoning amendment will recognize the established public function of the property and provide a consistent regulatory framework for its continued use.

The anticipated benefits of the proposed rezoning include:

1. **Zoning Compliance:** Aligning the property's zoning designation with its existing and proposed public educational uses.

2. **Long-Term Land-Use Certainty:** Establishing permitted public uses as uses by right under the applicable zoning classification.
3. **Future Development Flexibility:** Allowing the property to accommodate uses permitted within Zone P, subject to applicable regulatory requirements.
4. **Educational Infrastructure Planning:** Supporting the Department's ability to plan for the maintenance, modernization, and potential expansion of educational facilities.
5. **Responsible Public Land Management:** Ensuring that the property's zoning designation accurately reflects its public purpose and supports appropriate long-term land-use planning.

Request for Legislative Consideration

Honorable Chairperson and members of the Committee, the Virgin Islands Department of Education respectfully requests favorable consideration of **BR26-1324**, which proposes to amend Official Zoning Map No. SCZ-11 by rezoning Parcel Nos. 5-A and 5-C VI Corp Land (Estate Castle Burke), Prince Quarter, St. Croix, from A-1 (Agricultural) to P (Public).

The Department's request is based on the need to align the property's zoning designation with its existing and proposed public educational uses, establish long-term land-use certainty, and provide the appropriate zoning framework for future public development.

The requested amendment will also allow the property to be utilized for the purposes permitted within the Public zoning classification, consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

Conclusion

In closing, the Virgin Islands Department of Education appreciates the opportunity to present testimony regarding the proposed rezoning of the St. Croix Educational Complex.

The Department remains committed to ensuring that its educational facilities are developed, maintained, and operated in accordance with applicable territorial laws and regulations.

The proposed rezoning represents an important administrative and land-use planning measure that will align the property's zoning classification with its established public educational purpose and intended future uses.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education respectfully requests the Legislature's favorable consideration and approval of BR26-1324, Zoning Application #CCZP0055-26.

Thank you, Honorable Chairperson and members of the Committee, for your time and consideration.

We stand ready to respond to any questions or provide additional information that may assist the Committee in its deliberations.