

BILL NO. 35-0133

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

September 12, 2023

An Act amending title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 15, relating to scholarships by adding section 190gg to establish an educational scholarship program to support individuals interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands

PROPOSED BY: Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Title 17, chapter 15, Virgin Islands Code, is amended by adding section 190gg to read:

§ 190gg. The Virgin Islands Maritime Industry Educational Scholarship

The Virgin Islands Maritime Industry Educational Scholarship is established and administered by the Virgin Islands Board of Education to provide support to individuals interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands. The scholarship aims to encourage and assist qualified students in obtaining the education and training necessary for a successful career in various maritime-related fields.

(a) Maritime Industry means all industries and sectors directly related to maritime activities, including shipping, logistics, marine engineering, naval architecture, maritime law, marine sciences, and other related disciplines.

1 (b) The Board of Education shall develop guidelines, procedures, and criteria for the
2 application process, scholarship selection, and disbursement of funds.

3 (c) To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must be residents of the Virgin Islands
4 and demonstrate a genuine interest in pursuing a career in the maritime industry. Eligible
5 applicants may include high school graduates, college students, or individuals seeking
6 enrollment in accredited maritime colleges, universities, vocational institutions, or other
7 recognized educational programs related to the maritime industry.

8 (d) The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall establish a fair and transparent
9 selection process to identify scholarship recipients, and applicants for the scholarship shall
10 apply to the Board of Education pursuant to regulations established by the Board.

11 (e) Scholarships granted under this section may not exceed \$10,000 per year and
12 must be applied to the payment of tuition, lodging, board, transportation expenses, or any other
13 related expenses in connection with the studies pursued in each case. Each scholarship granted
14 shall be for not more than four years. The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall release
15 scholarship funds once the recipient has been formally accepted for enrollment at an
16 educational institution.

17 (f) A student receiving a scholarship under this section shall sign a contract
18 committing the student to return to the Virgin Islands upon completion of the course of study
19 and work in the Virgin Islands in the maritime industry or a related field. A student who fails
20 to comply with this section is liable to the Government of the Virgin Islands for the amount of
21 the scholarship.

22 (g) The Virgin Islands Board of Education may grant scholarships under this section
23 to applicants who are residents of the Virgin Islands for at least two years prior to the time of
24 application, notwithstanding that they might have been living outside of the Virgin Islands

1 temporarily while pursuing a course of study or while serving in the armed forces of the United
2 States.

3 (h) The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall maintain accurate records of the
4 scholarship program's administration, including the number of applicants, the selection process,
5 and the distribution of scholarship funds. An annual report on the scholarship program's
6 outcomes and impact shall be submitted to the Governor and the Virgin Islands Legislature for
7 review and evaluation.

8 (i) The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall conduct outreach efforts to promote
9 awareness of the scholarship program among potential applicants and educational institutions.
10 The scholarship program's information, application details, and deadlines must be made readily
11 available on the Board of Education's website and other appropriate platforms.

12 (j) There is authorized to be appropriated during each fiscal year such sums as the
13 Legislature may determine for deposit in the Virgin Islands Maritime Industry Educational
14 Scholarship. Upon appropriation, the sums shall remain available until expended.

15 **BILL SUMMARY**

16 This bill creates title 17, chapter 15, Virgin Islands Code, section 190gg and establishes
17 an educational scholarship fund to support individuals interested in pursuing a career in the
18 maritime industry in the Virgin Islands.

19 **BR23-0642/August 24, 2023/HLF**