



World Ocean School  
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Dear Senate Committee,

This letter serves as a testimonial on behalf of World Ocean School, a USVI-based marine education organization, in support of Bill 35-0133: Establishing an educational scholarship program to support individuals interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands. As the operators of two commercial sailing vessels, seasonally based in Christiansted, we know firsthand the importance and need for skilled and trained maritime professionals. A bill of this nature would promote and increase the sustainability of such a workforce in the USVI.

Currently, the majority of our vessels' crew join us from the mainland US. Given, however, that for over a third of the year, our operations are based in St. Croix, it would be of great value to us to have adequately trained mariners from the USVI among our crew. It would enrich our operations and build stronger relationships in the community.

World Ocean School provides at-sea programming for middle school-age students, introducing them to traditional sailing and the maritime trades. Having a professional crew on board from the USVI will demonstrate to our students that a maritime career is a desirable option and available to them in their local community. Additionally, World Ocean School can serve as a pathway and a means to train aspiring mariners, should this scholarship be created. Prior to the pandemic, we partnered with local high schools in a maritime workforce training program. Students from this program are still actively involved with World Ocean School and regularly sail as crew.

World Ocean School has long been committed to fostering maritime education, and we believe that this bill aligns with our mission. This bill represents an investment in the future of the Virgin Islands and the prosperity of its maritime industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Capt. Jill Hughes

Port Captain