



Legislature of the Virgin Islands

P.O. BOX 1690
ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS 00802
(340) 712-2278

CHAIRMAN
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, & Parks

VICE-CHAIRMAN
Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture

MEMBER
Committee on Rules & Judiciary
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety
Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunication
Subcommittee on Energy & Infrastructure Development

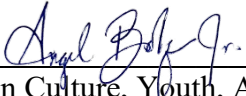
The Honorable
Angel Bolques, Jr.
Senator-At-Large
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: **The Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Jr.**
President, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Ms. Kurell A. Sheridan, JD
Executive Director, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Amos W. Carty, Jr., Esq.
Chief Legal Counsel, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

FROM: **Angel L. Bolques, Jr.** 
Chairman, Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks

DATE: 6/26/23

RE: **AGENDA | Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks**
Hearing—June 23, 2023

Pursuant to the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands Rule 605, the attached Committee Report is submitted for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks hearing held on June 23, 2023, at the Cleone H. Creque Legislative Annex on the island of S. John. The following represents all members, staff and testifiers in attendance, and the status of all agenda items.

Legislative Attendance

Committee Members & Attendance:

The Honorable Angel Bolques, Jr., **Chairman - Present**
The Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, **Vice-Chairman - Absent**
The Honorable Samuel Carrion - Present
The Honorable Alma Francis Heyliger - Present
The Honorable Novelle Francis Jr - Absent
The Honorable Franklin D. Johnson - Present
The Honorable Milton E. Potter - Present

Non-Committee Members in Attendance:

The Honorable Ray Fonseca

Stenographers:

Vashti O. Gerald-Berry
Nataya Melchoir-Munoz

Security:

Terrence Manning, Jr
DeVaughn Dowe
Tasha Forbes

Sergeant of Arms:

Shani Smith

Protocol Officer:

Supervisor of Housekeeping:

Office of Public Affairs:

Omari Hicks
Barry Leerdam
Kashief Hamilton
Africah Harrigan
Chaunte Herbert
Jamal Potter
Dequan Milliner

Transportation:

Legal Counsel:

Yvonne Tharpes

Clerk:

Ayaela Riley/Denisian Hodge

Timekeeper:

Ayaela Riley /Denisian Hodge

Advisor to Committee Hearing:

Marcellino Ventura

Staff of Senator Angel Bolques, Jr.

Denisian Hodge
Ana Castillo
Langley Shazor
Marcellino Ventura

The Committee Hearing was called to order by Chairman Angel L. Bolques, Jr. at 10:20am and convened to receive testimony on the following:

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks has scheduled a hearing for **Friday, June 23, 2023, 10:00 AM** at the **Cleone H. Creque Legislative Annex on St. John** to receive testimony and updates regarding youth programs and initiatives from Department of Human Services, Department of Labor, as well as being introduced to key stakeholders who are promoting and facilitating aviation careers to our youth. The committee will also consider ***Bill No. 35-0078 – a bill to require the Commissioner of the Department of Tourism to conduct a territory wide survey of the residents of the Virgin Islands to assist in the establishment of an official dish and dessert of the Virgin Islands.***

BLOCK I:

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Bill No. 35-0078 – a bill to require the Commissioner of the Department of Tourism to conduct a territory wide survey of the residents of the Virgin Islands to assist in the establishment of an official dish and dessert of the Virgin Islands to be presented to the committee for consideration. Proposed by Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques, Jr.

Invited Testifier:

The Honorable Joseph Boschulte
Commissioner, Virgin Islands Department of Tourism

Sandra Gerard-Leung
Ambassadorial Chef

Digby Stridiron
Ambassadorial Chef

Julius Jackson
Ambassadorial Chef

Taj Siwatu
Ambassadorial Chef

The Committee also received favorable testimony during the consideration of Bill No. 35-0078 ***a bill to require the Commissioner of the Department of Tourism to conduct a territory-wide survey of the residents of the Virgin Islands to assist in the establishment of an official dish and***

dessert of the Virgin Islands. Assistant Commissioner Alani Henneman on behalf of Commissioner Boschulte assured the committee that the Department of Tourism was up to the task of developing and administering a survey to begin gathering information on the myriad of cuisines native to the Territory. They also assured the Committee that culture bearers will be included in the discussion. Supporters of this measure were Ambassadorial Chefs, Sandra Gerard-Leung and Julius Jackson. Though the members felt it difficult to come to a singular conclusion on a national dish and dessert, as well as the need to codify conducting a survey, they agreed that the concept further establishes the Virgin Islands' cultural and ethnic identity and enhances the USVI tourism product. The measure passed and will be forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.

BLOCK II:

11:30AM-1:00PM

Testimony and information regarding programs and initiatives that introduce young people to the aviation industry, particularly to consider a career path as a private or commercial pilot. Update on the Coral Wings program through UVI CELL that was established with the FAA Grant award in April of 2023. To receive stakeholder analysis of the pathways, obstacles, opportunities, deficiencies, and needs of their respective organizations, programs, and initiatives.

Invited Testifiers:

Makeda Dawson

Founder, Love City Flight Club

Dior Parsons

Founder, Society 340

Justin Bartosh

Pilot and Instructor, UflyUVI & Standard Aviation

Suzanne Darrow-Magras

Director, UVI CELL

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks convened in the Cleone H. Creque Legislative Annex today to highlight St. John based organizations, Love City Flight Club and Society 340, which are working on promoting aviation opportunities to our youth. St. John resident, pilot, and instructor, Justin Bartosh, who rounds out the triumvirate of aviation advocates, and continues to support the work of Ms. Dawson and Ms. Parsons through a multifaceted partnership. Dr. Suzanne Darrow-Magras, Director of UVI CELL, along with Program Specialist and Coral Wings Project Coordinator, Mrs. Janet Gonzalez-Rosario, spoke about the Coral Wings program, made possible by a recently awarded FAA grant, and encouraged young people to apply to the program.

BLOCK III:

1:00PM-4:00PM

Testimony and updates on the status of youth programs and youth initiatives from the Department of Human Services' Youth and Aging Services & Programs such as your Intervention & Prevention Services, Head start Programs, Youth Rehabilitation Centers (in collaboration with DOJ), Foster Care, Senior Living Centers, and Senior Recreation Centers. Also, the Department of Labor's Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYWEP), Labor Investing For Tomorrow

(LIFT) Internship Program, the Career Exploration Program, Jobs for America Graduates (JAG), and the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) and any other services or programs that the department offers for the youth and aging (elderly) population.

Invited Testifiers:

The Honorable Kimberly Causey-Gomez

Commissioner, Virgin Islands Department of Human Services

The Honorable Gary Malloy

Commissioner, Virgin Islands Department of Labor

Commissioner Kimberly Causey-Gomez and her team gave updates on Youth and Aging Services & Programs such as Intervention & Prevention Services, Head Start Programs, Youth Rehabilitation Center, Foster Care, Homes for the Aged, and Senior Recreation Centers. She highlighted the federal funding earmarked for the reconstruction of Head Start playgrounds throughout the Territory, the installation of security cameras and surveillance systems at all Head Start sites, as well as support for six major Head Start construction projects spanning all three islands. Commissioner Causey-Gomez also elaborated on the status of current programs within the agency to support the Territory’s aging population. Funding for these programs remains one of the major inhibiting factors for expansion and comprehensiveness. Department of Labor Commissioner, Gary Molloy (and team) gave testimony and answered questions regarding the department’s career path opportunities and services, specifically the Summer Youth Work Experience, (SYWEP), Labor Investing for Tomorrow (LIFT) Internship Program, the Career Exploration Program, and Jobs for America Graduates (JAG-VI). He highlighted the great work of the Youth Team, which is responsible for in-house academic and career assessments to determine the services and activities for youth, which services over 800 young people annually. One of the other points of interest was the Registered Apprenticeship Program, which is intended for long-term employment. Participants in this program earn a wage while also getting on-the-job training and job-relevant education

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks was adjourned at 4:04 pm.

Roll call on Bill 35-0078:

Members	Yes	No
Senator Marvin A. Blyden	Absent	
Senator Samuel Carrion	X	
Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger		X
Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.	Absent	
Senator Franklin D. Johnson		X
Senator Milton E. Potter	X	
Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.	X	