

GOVERNMENT OF  
THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS



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DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Good morning, Senators of the 35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, members of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks, legislative staff, members of the media, and the listening and viewing audience.

I am Alani Henneman, Assistant Commissioner- Marketing at the Department of Tourism. On behalf of Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, who is currently representing the territory at the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association's 2023 Platinum Associate Member Advisory Council Conference, we want to thank you for allowing us to testify regarding the proposed legislation BR23-0483. **The legislation, sponsored by Senator Angel L. Bolques Jr., calls forward a request for Commissioner Boschulte and the Department of Tourism to disseminate a survey to residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands to identify an official dish and dessert for the territory.**

**Food in its purest essence is one of the cornerstones of our rich Virgin Islands culture. It is an amalgamation of the diverse cultures that have sowed into the fabric that defines the territory and sets us uniquely apart from the rest of the Caribbean. Establishing a national dish and dessert will only stand to elevate our already thriving Culinary and Agriculture Tourism, including our Carnival Food Fairs, the Taste of St. Croix, Mango Melee, Agrifest, King of the Wing Competition, and others. Once selected, these dishes will serve as the center of our marketing campaigns, providing a centralized culinary point for visitors to have an authentic USVI experience.**

**We have conferred with our internal and consultant partners to strategize a base outline of how to successfully develop, publish and publicize the survey utilizing a multi-pronged digital approach to reach a larger audience.**

**The survey would be centered around an online platform that limits respondents to choose only one of the preselected dishes in each category or a single fill-in option. As a primarily digital survey, we will distribute information about the campaign using targeted ads on social media, lightboxes on the department's website, and various localized digital ads throughout the territory. In addition to the digital survey, we have ideated ways to include a call center and regulated in-person drop box voting at the department's offices and other a centralized locations.**

**As this testimony comes to a close, the team at the Department of Tourism stand in favor of the proposed bill and the overarching establishment of a national dish and dessert. Additionally, the amended timeline to execute the survey is more than sufficient to complete the project.**

**To Senator Bolques, Jr., thank you for bringing this proposal forward and for the opportunity to share our insight. To the members of the 35th Legislature, we appreciate your time and look forward to continuing our combined efforts to elevate the U.S. Virgin Islands as a premier destination.**