

Senator Angel Bolques, Jr., Chair
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks

Makeda Dawson
Society 340-The Love City Flying Club

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Support of Youth & Aging Programs and Services

Being the only native female pilot from St. John, my proudest achievements are outreach events that seek to help those walking in my footsteps. It's for this reason that I support the Committee's efforts to support youth programs, such as The Love City Flying Club that I recently founded with Society 340 to create and support the next generation of St. Johnian pilots.

Boeing estimates a need for over 2 million pilots, maintenance technicians and cabin crews to support the long-term demand for the aviation industry. Many airlines have proclaimed that the solution to meet this demand is by increasing diversity. This renders students growing up on St. John the perfect candidates.

Throughout my flight training journey at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, I have had several setbacks with most being attributed to lack of finances. In fact, most of my Black counterparts that trained alongside me also faced financial roadblocks in their journey's. Apart from the college tuition costs, flight training costs can be upwards of \$100,000. Throughout my tenure as a student on St. John, I did not partake in any experiences that provided me with insight into opportunities within the aviation industry. As an undergraduate student, I was offered very little financial support from the USVI Government. This did not inhibit my passion and drive to continue working towards my goal, however, had I been provided more financial support and opportunities to meet mentors along the way, perhaps my path would have progressed more quickly.

In closing, the youth of St. John need to be exposed to opportunities within the aviation and aerospace industries and with programs like The Love City Flying Club having government support we can achieve that. By developing infrastructure that will serve as a foundation for the next generation of St. Johnian pilots, we can eliminate potential roadblocks they might face, allowing their journeys to be smoother than mine. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.