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Good morning Honorable Marise C. James, Chairwoman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, committee members, other members of the 35th Legislature present, and the listening and viewing audience; I am Dr. Kyza A. Callwood, Chairman of the 21st Virgin Islands Board of Education (hereinafter the Board).

Thank you for the invitation to testify on Bill No. 35-0055 - an Act amending Title 17 of the Virgin Islands Code pertaining to school curriculum in elementary and secondary schools. During the 34th Legislature, the Board participated in a bill review session and a Legislative Committee on Education and Workforce Development meeting to discuss Bill No. 34-0238, now Act No. 8684 relating to Virgin Islands history and Caribbean history curriculum in public schools. The Board maintains its position that while it is imperative that local and regional history is taught, emphasis must be placed on the recurring need for additional resources and qualified history teachers. Additionally, adjustment to class schedules will be necessary given the limited amount of instruction hours required. There is simply not sufficient time in the school day for all the courses/subjects mandated by the Legislature to be included as a stand-alone course for all students. While VI History is a stand-alone course and a graduation requirement for every student on the senior high level, it is taught within the context of the social studies curriculum on the primary level.

Furthermore, the Board reviewed the Department of Education's (Department) VI Standards of Achievement (VISA) which holds the Department accountable for higher educational and academic goals from 2022 through 2024. In August of 2022 the Board approved the standards for social studies, which includes VI history. The Board requested that the Department revise the VISA to include content and materials to be used for VI and Caribbean history as well as acquire and make available to all schools, additional resources by local and Caribbean authors and historians.

In conclusion, the Board supports the amendment in Section 1 (b) of Bill No. 35-0055 regarding family life, drug prevention, and sex education. Lastly, the Department is to be commended for the great work on the standards of achievement presented to the Board. As it pertains to the history of the Virgin Islands and basic Caribbean history, it is the Board's expectation that the Department will provide clear guidance to all teachers on the instruction and integration of these subjects for a more holistic approach to education which removes barriers to make connections among different areas of studies as well as fosters learning that models real life. The Board looks forward to the Department's progress report to highlight what aspects of these subjects are being taught to students as outlined in the standards, curriculum, lesson plans, and other areas. Chairwoman James, thank you again for allowing the Virgin Islands Board of Education to provide testimony. We stand ready to answer questions.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Virgin Islands Board of Education is to provide leadership and oversight, set policy and advocate for continuous improvement of the Public Education System of the Virgin Islands of the United States.

VISION STATEMENT

Each child is provided with the best quality education which guarantees academic excellence, promotes our history and culture, and builds strong local and global communities.