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Meeting of the Committee on Education & Workforce Development May 16, 2024

Submitted By:
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Chief Negotiator
Office of Collective Bargaining

Good day Honorable Senator Marise James, Chairperson of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, other members of the Committee, non-committee members in attendance, and the People of the Virgin Islands. My name is Joss Springette, and I am the Chief Negotiator at the Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB). I appear before you today in response to the Committee's invitation requesting "a status update from the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Board, the Division of Personnel, and the Office of Collective Bargaining, regarding their organization's role in the workforce development system in the Virgin Islands, specifically addressing recruitment and retention of employees, employment opportunities in the Virgin Islands Government, workforce development programs and the services provided to help people find, prepare for, and maintain employment." My testimony will focus on recruitment and retention of employees.

Pursuant to Title 24, Section 377 of the Virgin Islands Code, the Office of Collective Bargaining exclusively represents the executive branch of government and its departments and divisions and negotiate on its behalf in all collective bargaining proceedings. OCB's representation of the executive branch covers all administrative matters in arbitration, mediation, and matters filed before the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). We also represent the executive branch in collective bargaining matters before the local and federal courts.

OCB also serves as an external legal, human resources and labor relations arm to all agencies that employ unionized employees. If it affects the employees, specifically bargaining unit employees, we encourage our clients to contact us for guidance. OCB serves in an advisory role on matters such as an agency's plans to reorganize, policy changes, and addressing morale issues. In addition, OCB negotiates wages and various terms and conditions of employment for unionized employees on behalf of the executive branch of government. These responsibilities help our clients to attract and retain the necessary talent to serve our community. Attached is a spreadsheet showing the status of each CBA and our tentative schedule for negotiations in 2024.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.