

BILL NO. 35-0101

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

June 12, 2023

A Resolution honoring and commending Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks for his tireless years of remarkable and invaluable contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the field of psychiatry, his advocacy for social justice for individuals with behavioral health and substance use issues, and for his music

PROPOSED BY: Senator Franklin D. Johnson

1 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Olaf "Bronco" Hendricks was born on St. Croix, Virgin Islands on
2 September 28, 1944, to Olaf B. Carlisle Hendricks and Bianca Sobotker Hendricks; and

3 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Hendricks grew up in Free Gut and attended kindergarden through 12th
4 grade at St. Mary's School in Christiansted, during a time when Free Gut was known as
5 “Upstreet” because the streets are literally located uphill from the main sections of town; and

6 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Hendricks enjoyed a nurturing, close-knit community and a childhood
7 filled with romps in the street, swims in the reservoir, storytelling and stilt-walkers. Although
8 many of the families have moved from the old neighborhood, this community was so close and
9 so special that their bonds have remained. Dr. Hendricks and his neighbors formed the group
10 the "Hillsiders" that met annually; and

11 **WHEREAS**, when he was between one and two years old, Dr. Hendricks contracted
12 polio and was transferred to Puerto Rico where he was placed in an iron lung for approximately

1 9 months. While recovering in Puerto Rico, he was exposed to the Spanish language and the
2 only way of communication; and

3 **WHEREAS**, during his high school years, Dr. Hendricks learned to play the saxophone
4 and owned several horses. He loved music and horseracing, but at a very young age he decided
5 to become a physician after he had an encounter with four-term Virgin Islands Senator Randall
6 “Doc” James, M.D., and Urika Moorehead, RN in public health; and

7 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Hendricks graduated from Howard University in Washington D.C.
8 with a bachelor’s degree in zoology in 1967, and a medical degree with a specialty in Psychiatry
9 in 1972, the same year Howard University conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on
10 former Governor of the Virgin Islands, the late Melvin Herbert Evans; and

11 **WHEREAS**, immediately after completing his residency in 1974, Dr. Hendricks
12 returned to the Virgin Islands and provided psychiatric services for the Division of Mental
13 Health, the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital, the Richmond Penitentiary, Anna's Hope
14 Detention Facility, now the Golden Grove Correctional Facility, and the Governor Juan F. Luis
15 Hospital. He also provided psychiatric services to almost all the public and private schools on
16 St. Croix and to many churches; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Hendricks served as Medical Director and Territorial Psychiatrist at the
18 Bureau of Corrections beginning in 1974, and the Director of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug
19 Dependency Services for several years. He served as the only psychiatrist at the St. Croix
20 Hospital, now the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center, from 1983 to 1996. He
21 served as Chief Medical Officer from 2007 to 2009, and remained a staff psychiatrist at the
22 hospital until 2011; and

23 **WHEREAS** throughout his career, Dr. Hendricks also worked on a rotational basis at
24 the St. Elizabeth Psychiatric hospital in Southeast, Washington, D.C., operated by the District

1 of Columbia Department of Behavioral Health, where he trained and volunteered for about six
2 years; and

3 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Hendricks was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Health and served
4 from 1991 thru 1993. In 1996, he was appointed interim Commissioner of Health by Governor
5 Roy L. Schneider.

6 **WHEREAS**, from 2007 to 2013, Dr. Hendricks was the psychiatrist at The Village
7 Rehabilitation Center on St. Croix, providing clinical services to persons with behavioral
8 disorders and persons with substance use issues and worked with the MISAH project
9 (Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord), providing homeless people with immediate
10 access to long-term, sustainable accommodations; and

11 **WHEREAS**, apart from his medical practice, Dr. Hendricks is a co-founder of the
12 Crucian Cultural Institute, the Hillsiders Association and the Crucian-Rican All-Ah-We
13 Organization. He was an original member of the board of governors of the Virgin Islands
14 Cultural Heritage Institute, where he served for more than eight years; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Hendricks played saxophone with the Quelbe band, Stanley and the
16 Ten Sleepless Knights, for more than forty years. He also spent time hosting the radio program
17 on WSTX, AM970“Common Cause”, where he discussed the beliefs, attitudes and values of
18 Virgin Islanders and other Caribbean people; and

19 **WHEREAS**, from 1961 to 2021, Dr. Hendricks bred and raised racehorses and
20 somewhere in that timeframe, between horseracing, practicing medicine, and playing music,
21 he found the time to marry his beautiful wife Mryl (Todmann), and together they raised four
22 children: Kemba (Deceased 1992), Kai, Kareena (Moses), and Rabiah (Foss);and

23 **WHEREAS**, throughout this amazing life, in which he has enjoyed much success and
24 has graciously given so much time and energy back to his community, Dr. Olaf “Bronco”

1 Hendricks had always insisted: “The responsibility for what happens on our islands lies with
2 us and only us!”; Now, Therefore,

3 ***Be it resolved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

4 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
5 Islands, honors and commends Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks for his tireless years of
6 remarkable and invaluable contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the field of
7 psychiatry, in his advocacy for social justice and change for individuals with behavioral health
8 and substance use issues, and in his music.

9 **SECTION 2.** In recognition and appreciation of his contributions to the people of the
10 Virgin Islands, the President of the Legislature or the President’s designee shall have a perma
11 plaque copy of this Resolution prepared and presented to the family, or the family’s designee,
12 of Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks, at an appropriate ceremony.

13 **BILL SUMMARY**

14 This bill honors and commends Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks for his tireless years of
15 remarkable and invaluable contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the field of
16 psychiatry, in his advocacy for social justice and change for individuals with behavioral health
17 and substance use issues, and in his music.

18 **BR23-0362/May 01, 2023/HLF**