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July 10th, 2023

Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph, Legislative Secretary & Committee Chairperson
35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands
Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs and Consumer Protection
Capitol Building- P.O. Box 1690
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Reference: Testimony in Support of VI Legislative Bill 35-0100 - A Resolution Honoring & Commending Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education and Founder Ms. Charlita Schuster

Greetings Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph:

This correspondence is to serve as an affirmative testimony in full support of *Bill Number 35-0100- A Resolution Honoring and Commending Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education and its Founder, Charlita Schuster, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Music In Motion Dance Academy* as sponsored by the Honorable Senator Samuel Carrion.

Enunciation: May this testimony be included in the official record of testimonies, legislative committee sessions, and related policy action protocols on behalf of this bill to honor and commend Music in Motion School of Higher Dance Academy and Founder & Artistic Director Charlita Schuster.

"Through Movement, I found my calling. Through ballet, I found my voice." - Misty Copeland 1st African American Female Principal Dancer in the American Ballet Theatre in 2015

Preparation: For more than 40 years, founder and Artistic Director Charlita Schuster exemplifies and shares her skills, talents and expertise as a seasoned prima ballerina, master dance educator, professional etiquette consultant, and dance performing production artistic director and producer extraordinaire. The frequency of professional dance and performing arts training, performance, and production opportunities for her students within international and national dance companies has remained consistent throughout the 40-year legacy of Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education. As a parent and family supporter of Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education, Ms. Schuster has provided dance education for one of our daughters, AnutMeri Davis Kahina Christopher, who along with two other remarkable students under her intensive training successfully auditioned for and received professional dance instruction and performance opportunities with The Dance Theatre of Harlem in New York City. Essentially, the freedom and access of embracing disciplined dance education for our youth in St. Croix with requisite skills to compete nationally and expand to international spaces has been nurtured through the work of Ms. Schuster within Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education.

"What does dance give you? The freedom to be who you are and do what you want to do." -Arthur Mitchell, Founder of Dance Theatre of Harlem & 1st African American Principal Male Dancer in New York City Ballet in 1955

Opening: This VI Legislative Bill 35-0100 proposing the resolution to honor Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education represents a timely recognition and acknowledgement of the commitment to professional dance, choreography, production, and dance education that have been consistently provided within high-quality ballet instruction used by Ms.

Schuster exemplified by her integration of the Vaganova™ Russian Ballet Curriculum in her teaching program. Music in Motion School of Higher Dance Education continues to use the Vaganova curriculum to ensure the professional preparedness and international level of certified training provided to students of dance here on St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Ms. Schuster continues to provide ballet instruction primarily with other dance forms from complimentary seasoned dance professionals within the interdisciplinary and transcultural productions in pageantry, fashion shows, community services (i.e. weddings, celebrations of life), educational professional development workshops, festivals, carnivals, concerts, cultural heritage presentations and much more. There are a host of performances, workshops and select media links that are quite extensive documenting the productions presented under the direction of Ms. Charlita Schuster within the Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education Legacy.

Select examples of media documentation include:

- http://www.virginislandsdailynews.com/news/local/music-in-motion-moves-ahead-with-40th-anniversary-celebration/article_8cd48159-deee-54de-9a44-47aa098056a9.html May 9.2022
- <https://youtu.be/Xkwaql4r4HQ> - St. Croix Government House July 2.2021 for VI Emancipation
- <https://fb.watch/IbWT14pOu/> - "BLAST" Concert- June 6th, 2021
<https://www.facebook.com/100009517660967/videos/2825329537794274/> for MIMSHDE Concert "Dancers of Different Seasons" February 28.2021
<https://fb.watch/IcONi8gUj/> April 2018- VICCC@UVI/VI LitFest
- <https://fb.watch/II3VUTPwMx/> MIMSHDE Informercials 2016-2017 for Dance Classes
- <https://fb.watch/IbP5D7-pB/> MIMSHDE Promotional Class Video 2016

Implementation: Several of the experienced and seasoned dance professionals providing dance education and performing arts production companies in the Virgin Islands have spent most of their respective careers in actual dance production, global tours, direction, teaching, and related performing creative arts industries. During my appointment as the inaugural founding director of the *Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center (VICCC)* at the *University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)* (2012-2021) and as part of the teaching faculty of the *College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences* at UVI, I observed and supported the contractual consultation services provided by Ms. Charlita Schuster and other experienced dance performance and education professionals specifically of St. Croix that were commissioned by UVI to facilitate the successful and intensive university-protocols for the proposal, design, creation, development and ultimately the approval of UVI's inaugural Bachelor's in Fine Arts Degree program with a specialization in Dance! I wish to note that a majority of the dance education professionals engaged in this higher education BFA in Dance degree creation process did not have contemporary graduate degrees yet possessed the exceptional skills, vision and performing arts expertise to create an approved and now established university-level degree program. This is something that is worthy of being addressed in the form of comprehensive education policy formations inclusive of yet not limited to honorary and life-long learning credentials with commensurate transcripts inclusive of graduate-level educational courses and credits for these professionals in dance and creative performing arts' industries to secure the degrees required for them to teach in the university programs they are capably commissioned and qualified to create in professional and higher educational environments.

Ms. Schuster's communitarian and pragmatic scholarship, skills, talents and expertise as a master dance educator credentialed to teach using the Vaganova™ curriculum as a prima ballerina, director, producer and performing fine artist provided the foundation for the Ballet courses for the UVI BFA in Dance program and exemplifies another reason this honorific recognition proposed for her and Music in Motion School of Higher Dance Education in its' 40th Anniversary of service and education to the St. Croix, Virgin Islands community is worthy and most deserving of approval by the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands- especially during this 175th VI Emancipation Commemorative year full of recognitions, acknowledgements, observances, honorable mentions, and cultural heritage celebrations of contributions of excellence throughout the historical legacy of these beloved, free, and blessed Virgin Islands.

Ms. Schuster and her work within Music in Motion School of Higher Dance Education are evidence of this intensive work and dedication to sustaining a respect for Ballet and Dance Education within Caribbean spaces in St. Croix, the Virgin Islands Caribbean and beyond. For more than two decades, I have had the honor and privilege to collaboratively work, cooperatively observe and/or support Music in Motion School of Higher Dance Education as a dance parent; community educator; cultural heritage performing artist (teaching/choreographing Bamboula, Wellness etc.); as a colleague of the *Arts and Culture Sector* with the *Non-Profit Consortium* of the *St. Croix Foundation for Community Development*; and in other engaging ways. Ms. Schuster is to be commended and recognized honorably for being able to maintain and sustain Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education beyond the challenges and obstacles experienced during 40 years of existence while still remaining

operational in 2023 with amazing creative contributions, educational achievements, and professional opportunities for our youth, families, visitors, and supporters of St. Croix and the Virgin Islands that extend for generations upon generations.

Closing: It is an honor and privilege to share this affirmative, positive, and supportive testimony for Ms. Charlita Schuster and Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education for a multiplicity of reasons as shared herein and linked to her passionate commitment to the performing and fine arts, educational excellence, and the creative industries that are national, regional, and international. Ms. Schuster's 40-plus year career in dance education and performances through Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education has created a legacy of St. Croix and Virgin Islands' ambassadors that serves as a beacon throughout the world. Ms. Schuster's stewardship in the arena of dance, education, etiquette training, and creative arts industries remains as a shining example of the services provided by a stellar Outstanding Virgin Islander and Living Legend and "Keeper of the Flame" based on the sacrifices, labor, and dedication she continues to extend within her home community here on St. Croix with international extensions of her students inclusive of her own children.

In closing, I share these words:

"I never feel a greater happiness or freedom in myself as I feel when I dance...Excellence, discipline and respect for ballet dance in St. Croix and the Caribbean are an important part of my life work within Music in Motion School of Higher Dance Education." Charlita Schuster, Founder & Artistic Director of MIMSHDE formed in 1982 established in 1983.

Honorable Senators, thank you for granting time to respectfully compartmentalize 40-plus years of experience, achievements, and worthy recognition into the 5 minutes allocated for this testimony. It is with great pleasure, honor, and respect that I share this supportive testimony for your serious reflections, deliberations, and inclusion. I look forward to this august body of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands of the United States- this Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs and Consumer Protection and ultimately the Committee of the Whole- to support the successful passage of this *Bill Number 35-0100- A Resolution Honoring and Commending Music In Motion School of Higher Dance Education and its Founder, Charlita Schuster, on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Music In Motion Dance Academy.*

Respectfully shared in Culture, Healing, Arts, Technology & Spirituality,
Remain inspired!



Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina

Immediate Past President, Caribbean Studies Association 2023-2024

President, Caribbean Studies Association 2022-2023

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