

Testimony to Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection Meeting, July 12, 2023, Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix.

Good morning Honorable Committee Chairperson Carla J. Joseph, and other esteemed and Honorable Senators present, Ladies and Gentlemen, Listening and Viewing audience.

My name is Dr. Mavis L. Matthew, and it is my distinct privilege to come before you in support of Bill No. 35-0029- An Act honoring and commending Donna Marie Christian-Christiansen M.D. for her tireless contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the medical field and representation in the United State Congress sponsored by Senate President Novelle Francis and Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

By way of introduction, I would like to take a moment to place my qualifications on the record to outline my involvement in public health. I am Board-certified in Pediatrics and My career spans three decades of service. I returned to St. Croix as a member of the United States Public Health Service in 1987 and began employment at the federally qualified Frederiksted Center. I was appointed as the Title V Maternal and Child Health Director where I administered programs such as universal hearing screening, newborn genetic screening, and established specialty clinics in Pediatric Cardiology, Pulmonology, and Neurology and coordinated care for children with special health care needs. In 2001 I was appointed Commissioner of Health, Virgin Islands Department of Health, where the Office of Public Health Preparedness was established and responded to the anthrax threat. This was a coalition building exercise that provided lasting infrastructure development. After 15 years of public health service, I was recruited to the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital to serve as Chief of Pediatrics and was eventually appointed as the Chief Medical Officer in 2014. In this capacity, I led the medical staff in areas of recruitment, quality assurance, performance measures, compliance, and strategic planning. I was appointed to the Virgin Islands Board of Medical Examiners in 2014 and I became an Federation of State Medical Board (FSMB) Fellow in 2015. At the 2023 annual meeting, I was elected to the Nominating Committee of this national medical regulatory organization. June 2023, on behalf of the Virgin Islands Medical Society I served as the House of Delegates Representative to the American Medical Association meeting.

By a way of disclosure, I have served as the Pediatrician for Dr. Christian Christensen's daughter and two granddaughters. I am not registered with any political party here in the Territory.

Dr. Christian Christensen have served St. Croix as a private practitioner in Family Practice which laid the foundation for her work in primary care, building family and community health service. As a family practitioner, she was engaged as the Director of Maternal and Child Health which enabled her to manage disease processes from birth to aging. I am personally knowledgeable of two special public health areas of involvement with the National Medical Association and the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust which she chaired for fifteen years and spearheaded pioneering work in addressing the HIV/AIDS minority health and Mental Health. Her advocacy broke barriers to ending the stigma associated with these diseases. The other special area of involvement that I personally appreciated was in environmental health. Through the National Medical Association physician education was promoted especially about cancer registry and toxic diseases.

I close by noting the visits that the maternal and child health delegation, including the late Alicia Brathwaite and other staff that traveled to the Capital, to participate in dialogue with the then Congresswoman about the barriers to care and opportunities afforded via the Federal Government. Significant progress has been made and the Delegate's work made a difference as a physician.

As a first female physician to serve as a member of the U.S. Congress, the first woman to represent an offshore territory, and the first woman delegate from the United States Virgin Islands the Honorable Congresswoman has launched a legacy to be sustained. The renaming of the Charles Harwood Complex to the Donna Christian-Christiansen Department of Public Health is a pioneering step to register the proper recognition of her unselfish and dedicated service.

*I close by quoting Sir Isaac Newton, "If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of the giants ".*

*Mavis L. Matthew, MD, MPH, FAAP*