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*The mission of VIDOL is to administer a system of effective programs and services designed to develop, protect, and maintain a viable workforce.*

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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETEREANS  
AFFAIRS, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

GARY MOLLOY  
COMMISSIONER

MAY 31, 2023

Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph, Chairperson of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, Honorable Members of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, distinguished Senators, ladies and gentlemen, listening, viewing and virtual audiences. I am Jean Forde, Assistant Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL), representing Gary Molloy, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

I am here today to testify on Bill No.35-0008 – An Act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1, section 8a relating to the Office of Veterans Affairs to establish the Veterans Council, under the Office of Veterans Affairs to serve as an advisor to the Office of Veterans Affairs, and as a liaison between the Office of Veterans Affairs and all private entities serving veterans in the Territory, sponsored by Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff.

VIDOL has two Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists territory-wide that reside within our Division of Workforce Development. Both DVOPs are responsible for assisting eligible veterans and eligible spouses with all employment and training needs. Veterans receive first preference to job listings and all qualified DOL-funded job training programs.

Title 3 Chapter 1, Section 8(a) provides for the establishment of the Office of Veterans Affairs within the Office of the Governor and sets forth the responsibilities of the Office. Amongst other mandates, the Office of Veterans Affairs is charged in Section 8(b)(2) with the responsibility of compiling data concerning veterans residing in the Territory, and recommending legislation concerning veterans. The Office of Veterans Affairs through its compilation of data and direct contact with Veterans is in a unique position to gather the concerns of veterans and advocate to its federal counterpart and local agencies on their behalf. Further, in Section 8(b)(9) the Office of Veterans Affairs must investigate, compile, and maintain complete and accurate data concerning veterans and all territorial activities relating thereto. The Office of Veterans Affairs is therefore directly responsible for ensuring that all territorial activities concerning veterans are properly vetted. As a partner with the Office of Veterans Affairs, we are not in favor of Bill No.35-0008, as we believe that the bill will establish another layer of bureaucracy and will detract from ensuring that veterans receive vital services.

I would like to personally thank the Bryan/Roach Administration, the Office of Veterans Affairs, and my V.I. Department of Labor staff for their committed efforts on behalf of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Once again, thank you. My staff and I are ready to answer any questions you may have at this time.