

Testimony of Bridget L. Dawson

Bill No. 35-0239

Presented to The Committee on Government Operations,

Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection

Of the 35th Legislature of the US Virgin Islands

June 28, 2024

Good day, Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph; Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, Esteemed Members of the Committee of the 35th Legislature of the US Virgin Islands, and the listening and viewing audiences.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am Bridget Dawson; Frederiksted, St. Croix became my home 36 years ago. It is an honor and privilege for me to appear before the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, to offer testimony in support of Bill No. 35-0239– An Act honoring and commending Mrs. Claire Lorraine Brown Roker for her dedicated service to the Virgin Islands community by naming the visitors center at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, the “Claire L. Roker Visitors Center.”

My association and friendship with Mrs. Roker began over 30 years ago during her tenure with the Department of Tourism, in her position(s) of Assistant Director, Director of Tourism and then on to Assistant Commissioner of Tourism in the Farrelly-Hodge Administration. In the subsequent 30-plus years, I have been privileged to work closely with Mrs. Roker on countless community initiatives, projects, programs and events during these three decades. Working alongside many advocates and leaders of these Virgin Islands, I can attest that when any initiative was presented requiring “boots on the ground” to ensure a successful outcome, Claire Roker would be one of the first to arrive and one of the last to leave. She is and has been a stalwart supporter and warrior for this Territory.

I am the last surviving founder of the Frederiksted Economic Development Association, Inc. (FEDA) Founded in 1996, FEDA worked tirelessly on behalf of the town of Frederiksted and the island of St. Croix. FEDA’s mission was to serve as a community based organization to provide stimulus and enhancement to the economic base of the town while supporting and preserving the culture, traditions and history of Frederiksted.

In 1998 FEDA lobbied the office of Delegate to Congress Donna Christian-Christiansen in our goal of obtaining Enterprise Zone Status for the town of Frederiksted. In her capacity as Office Manager for Congresswoman Christian-Christiansen, Claire Roker worked diligently on the initiative, along with our Delegate to Congress. On July 14TH, 1999 The

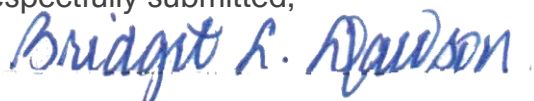
Enterprise Zone Program Act of 1999 for businesses in Frederiksted, Christiansted and Savan was passed by the Legislature of the US Virgin Islands. As you know, this very important program has been expanded and is now under the management of the USVI Economic Development Authority. Claire Roker is an integral part of the creation and successful passage of our Enterprise Zone Status.

In 2001 FEDA convinced the busy Claire Roker to join the FEDA Board of Directors. In the past 23 years Mrs. Roker has served in every Executive Board position, most recently as Treasurer of the organization. Whether it was Sunset Jazz, Harbor Night, Wednesdays on the Waterfront, Blue Bay Jazz Fest, FEDA Teen Summer Programs, Culture Nights on King Street, holiday luncheon programs for the Elderly, Hovensa's 40th Anniversary events, July 4th Festivities, Emancipation Day Events, Christmas Festivities, Taxi Driver Training Programs, the Frederiksted Revitalization Project, collaborations with the Hotel & Tourism Association, or any other initiative that FEDA produced or was involved in, Claire has always been on the front line working tirelessly. Just imagine; Claire Roker's efforts and involvement with FEDA were but a small "drop in the bucket" representing all of the magnitude of her hard work and efforts on behalf of her beloved US Virgin Islands.

Admittedly, without being officially designated to do so, I confidently speak on behalf of every Founder and past and current Board Member of the Frederiksted Economic Development Association, Inc., as well as anyone that has ever loved or lived in Frederiksted, when I state that there is no living individual more worthy of the commendation and recognition provided by this Bill.

I personally thank you for honoring Claire Lorraine Brown Roker. We all thank you. It is well deserved.

Respectfully submitted,



Bridget L. Dawson

simplybridget.vi@gmail.com

340.277.7977

PO Box 1802

Frederiksted, VI 00841