

Alscess Lewis-Brown

5029 Estate Tipperary, Christiansted, St. Croix 00820

June 27, 2024

Honorable, Senator Carla J. Joseph

Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands

Good morning, Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph, Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection; Honorable, Senator Marise C. James, sponsor of Bill No. 35—0195, other senators present and members of the listening audience

It is a distinct pleasure for me to offer testimony on behalf of my friend Willard John in support of a Resolution sponsored by Senator Marise C. James honoring and commending him for his many contributions to the youth and the culture of the Virgin Islands. I regret not being able to be present today, but I must attend a funeral of dear friend.

I have known Willard for most of my life because we both attended Saints Peter and Paul School. Additionally, we have been colleagues here on St. Croix. So, adding up what I really know about Willard to this point, I would say that from very early in his life, he has been engaged in some kind of guardianship or community service. I remember as a youngster spending my summers learning to swim at the Red Cross swimming camp on Lindbergh bay in St. Thomas, as a teenager Willard was a swimming instructor and life guard in that Red Cross program.

Here on St. Croix, over the years, he raised his family built his career and simultaneously dedicated his life not only to guarding sacred cultural traditions but also to community service. As we take account of Willard's contributions to this community, we can say that his life pursuits spell service over and over. From his years as a vi doe coordinator of cultural education, as a school administrator to his service on numerous community boards and organizations, his work spells service. But standing above all of his contributions is his joyful gifting as a Moko Jumbi in local festival and carnival parades and his continued life's work with the famed Guardians of culture Moko Jumbi group which he founded to transform the lives of young men training them to become Moko Jumbies, giving them an opportunity to not only engage in cultural sharing but also for them to be paid for their talent.

Sometimes some of us spend a life time promoting or building programs, projects, systems, an agency or perhaps even a house —creations that can be destroyed over night from wind and rain or human neglect or intentions, but we can be naked in torrential rain and that rain will never wash away lessons learned, heartfelt transformations that we engender, human joy and appreciate--- those intangible gifts that we gift to our community. This is what everlasting love must look like and this is what Willard has been gifting to this community with his life's work.

This is the kind of work that cannot be destroyed. Let he who has served be served

Sincerely

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