

35th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**

SENATOR CARLA J. JOSEPH - CHAIR

VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bill No. 35- 0253

TESTIMONY

October 22nd, 2024

Honorable Carla J. Joseph – Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection - Committee Members, other members of the 35th Legislature, fellow testifiers and colleagues, those in the listening and viewing audience... people of these beautiful United States Virgin Islands, Good morning!

I am Sidney Elskoe, Assistant Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department, and today I am pleased to represent the United States Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) on behalf of Mario M. Brooks, Acting Police Commissioner of the

Virgin Islands Police Department. Today, I appear before you with the goal of giving testimony in support of Bill No. 35-0253, "An Act honoring and commending police officers for the service they provide to the community and to recognize fallen law enforcement officers posthumously".

Madam Chairlady, members of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, and distinguished guests, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important piece of legislation. Bill No. 35-0253 serves as a testament to all law enforcement officers for their service to the community and recognizing fallen law enforcement officers posthumously. This bill, sponsored by Senator Diane T. Capehart, reflects a profound recognition of the commitment, dedication, and sacrifice that law enforcement officers provide to our communities.

The role of law enforcement is more than a profession; it is a calling. Officers dedicate their lives to upholding the law, ensuring the safety of our neighborhoods, and protecting the freedoms we

hold dear. In fulfilling their duties, they embody the principles of integrity, courage, and public trust. The Law Enforcement Oath of Honor serves as a powerful reminder that officers are committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards and being held accountable not only to the public but to each other.

Today, as we discuss the significance of Bill No. 35-0253, we recognize the extraordinary bravery and service of those who have paid the ultimate price in the line of duty. At this time, I will read the names of our fallen. Please take this time to reflect on the sacrifices these community servants have made to us all. Police Detective Delberth Phipps, Jr., Police Officer Colvin Terrance Georges, Sr., Police Officer Aaron Hodge, Police Officer Akeem Basil “Teddy” Newton, Police Officer Ariel Anton Frett, Police Officer Cuthbert Ezekiel Chapman, Police Officer Steven Alexis Hodge, Police Officer Dexter L. Mardenborough, Police Officer Richard Nicolas Callwood, Patrolman Wilbur Horatio Francis, Patrolman Patrick Emmanuel Sweeney, Patrolman Allan Williams, Patrolman Rudel Albert Parrott, Patrolman Leroy Alvaro Swan, Patrolman Leopold

Emanuel Fredericks, Jr., Patrolman Lionel Emanuel Isaac, and Marshal Randy Steven are among those whose acts of heroism have left a lasting impact on our community. Their sacrifices remind us of the inherent dangers of law enforcement and the unwavering commitment these individuals had to their duty.

These fallen officers are not only heroes in our eyes, but they have earned a place among those honored at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. The Memorial serves as a testament to the lives and legacies of over 23,000 fallen officers nationwide, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten. The mission of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund is to honor the fallen, tell the story of American law enforcement, and make it safer for those who serve. Founded in 1984, the Fund has provided a permanent space for remembrance and reflection, reminding us that the loss of any officer is a loss to our entire society.

According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, in the year 2023 alone, we saw a significant number of law

enforcement deaths, with 556 officers making the ultimate sacrifice since 2020 due to various causes including felonious attacks, traffic incidents, and COVID-19-related illnesses. These numbers serve as a sobering reminder of the risks that our law enforcement personnel face daily, whether responding to emergency calls, engaging with the community, or handling critical incidents. It is a stark reality that emphasizes the need to honor their service and ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten.

In the Virgin Islands, the officers we recognize today stood as pillars of strength, courage, and commitment to service. Their contributions to public safety and community well-being went beyond their daily duties. They took on the responsibility of protecting lives, preserving peace, and being the steady presence that residents could depend upon in times of crisis. Their sacrifices leave a legacy that deserves to be memorialized and serves as an inspiration to current and future generations of law enforcement officers.

Supporting Bill No. 35-0253 not only acknowledges the dedication of those who currently serve but also ensures that the memory of those who have fallen remains alive in our hearts and minds. By honoring these individuals posthumously, we reaffirm our commitment to upholding the values they lived by and to ensuring that their bravery and sacrifices are never forgotten. It is through such recognition that we show our gratitude and respect for their unwavering service.

In conclusion, I urge the Committee to pass Bill No. 35-0253. Doing so would serve as a tribute to the lives of those who gave everything for the safety of others and as a reminder of the noble calling of law enforcement. Let us ensure that the sacrifices of our fallen heroes—Police Detective Delberth Phipps, Jr., Police Officer Colvin Terrance Georges, Sr., Police Officer Aaron Hodge, Police Officer Akeem Basil “Teddy” Newton, Police Officer Ariel Anton Frett, Police Officer Cuthbert Ezekiel Chapman, Police Officer Steven Alexis Hodge, Police Officer Dexter L. Mardenborough, Police Officer Richard Nicolas Callwood, Patrolman Wilbur Horatio

Francis, Patrolman Patrick Emmanuel Sweeney, Patrolman Allan Williams, Patrolman Rudel Albert Parrott, Patrolman Leroy Alvaro Swan, Patrolman Leopold Emanuel Fredericks, Jr., Patrolman Lionel Emanuel Isaac, and Marshal Randy Steven—are recognized with the dignity and honor they so richly deserve.

Thank you for your time, your consideration of this important bill, and your commitment to ensuring that the legacy of our fallen law enforcement officers is properly honored. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.