

Good afternoon. I am Calvert White, Commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation, here to testify on the Act honoring and commending Bryan “Benny-Demus” Boulai for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries, his contributions to the Virgin Islands community, awarding him The Official Key to the Virgin Islands, and appropriating \$10,000 annually to The DEMUS Foundation.

While I’m here in my official capacity, it's my personal relationship with Mr. Boulai that I want to highlight today. By the way, this is the first and last time I’ll refer to him as Mr. anything.

I first met Benny in the early '90s, in 1991 to be exact. I remember that year vividly because it was when the Chicago Bulls won their first championship, and ironically, it was when Benny moved from Frydenhoj to Anna’s Retreat. I was already living in Anna’s Retreat, and that’s where Bennetton—as we called him—became a childhood friend. We bonded over our shared love for basketball. Our first introduction was on the Anna’s Retreat basketball court. “Why do they call you Bennetton?” I asked after noticing the shirt he was wearing from the clothing company Benetton. Then I realized, and I said, "Never mind, forget it."

Benny was always decked out in Benetton gear. He had the shirts, the pants, the socks—every day, it was something new and different from Benetton. That’s how he got the nickname Bennetton. Come to find out, his brother worked at the Benetton clothing store and would hook him up with free clothes!

I think I only found out his real name was Bryan a couple of years ago. To be honest, I’m not sure who told him he was good at basketball, but in his mind, he believed he could play. I’m here today to put it on the record—thank God he was blessed with music skills because basketball was not his strong suit. As I said, my memories of those days are strong, partly because, as a die-hard Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan fan, I wanted Benny to do one thing on the court—rebound and pass me the ball, nothing else. We had hundreds of battles on that court, and I’m sure I won 99.99% of the time, but that never stopped him from showing up the next day for another beatdown.



A couple of years later, I graduated and left the territory to pursue my basketball career at Southeast Missouri University. During that time, Benny discovered his passion for music. Though we were miles apart and barely communicated, I started hearing about a young, upcoming DJ named Benny-Demus. When I asked my friends back home, "Who is Benny-Demus?" they responded, "That's Bennetton from Anna's!"

Benny linked up with Rock City, who at the time was known as 2 Equip. Following his dream, he took a leap of faith and relocated to Atlanta, GA. As fate would have it, in 2005, I also relocated to GA, where basketball once again brought us together. We'd always make sure to call each other on Sundays and ask if the other was going to the park off Memorial Drive, where all the Virgin Islanders played. While I was coming down from my high as a semi-pro basketball player, Benny was on the rise in his music career, becoming the official DJ for Akon. Songs like "Locked Up" catapulted Benny into music stardom.

Success was good to Benny. I remember when he bought his first house. To this day, I tell him how much I missed that house. I remember when he bought his customized BMW, which, by the way, got hit on his way to see me on Tara Boulevard. I remember the birth of his daughter. I remember him inviting me to St. Maarten with him and Akon to see them perform. I remember all of our firsts, but what I remember the most is that through all his success, the money, the houses, and the cars, he remained Bennetton from the basketball court. To this day, he hasn't changed one bit.

He's a family man whose kids call me Uncle Cal, just as mine call him Uncle Benny—except for my daughter, who calls him a monster because of his mohawk. Despite his success and the demands of his career, Benny has always made time for his loved ones. Whether it's spending time with family or making sure to check in on old friends, he remains grounded and connected to those who matter most to him. Benny is a son of the soil who beat the odds, made it on the big stage in the mainland, and never forgot where he came from. His VI pride is evident during his shows, whether he's repping a VI flag or displaying his VI tattoos to the world. He takes every opportunity to remind people of his roots, ensuring that the Virgin Islands are represented wherever



he goes.

In recent years, philanthropy has become a big part of Benny's life. He would always talk about giving back to the Virgin Islands, which led him to start the Benny-Demus Foundation. The purpose was to organize events in the Virgin Islands to raise money for non-profit organizations. His kickball game, which started as a joke between him and Wally Cat over a marble game, has now turned into an annual event that onlookers eagerly anticipate during the carnival festivities. He then included his Glow in the Dark Bike Ride, which encourages bikers, young and old, to come together and enjoy a fun night ride. Benny, the ultimate Virgin Islander, even took his bike event to St. Croix, successfully hosting Glow in the Dark bike rides in Christiansted and Frederiksted.

But Benny is more than just a DJ. He's a producer, a manager, an actor, a movie director—just to name a few of his many talents. He's been the ultimate friend for years, always willing to give his last without expecting anything in return. As I sit here today, in full support of Bill Number 35-0285, An Act honoring and commending Bryan "Benny-Demus" Boulai for his outstanding achievements in the music and entertainment industries and his contributions to the Virgin Islands community, I am proud to be a part of this well-deserved recognition. He's known by many as Benny, if you're from back in the hood, it was Bennetton, if you're his family, it's Bryan, but to me, he will always be my friend.

Congratulations, Benny. This recognition is well-deserved. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have about my friend.

