

TESTIMONY FROM BRIDGET HODGE RE: BILL NO. 35-0286
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
9/24/24 @ 10:00AM

PROTOCOL ALREADY HAVING BEEN ESTABLISHED, GOOD MORNING TO ALL!

MY NAME IS BRIDGET HODGE AND I AM THE MIDDLE CHILD OF TODAY'S HONOREE.

THIS MORNING YOU ARE GOING TO HEAR OTHER TESTIFIERS SPEAK ABOUT ALL THE AMAZING THINGS MY DAD HAS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGHOUT HIS LONG AND ILLUSTRIOUS LEGAL CAREER. YOU WILL PROBABLY HEAR HOW HE HAS MOTIVATED AND MENTORED TOO MANY PEOPLE TO MENTION, SOME OF WHOM SIT AMONG US TODAY, WHO WOULD FREELY AND GLADLY SHARE THEIR INTERACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES WITH US IF GIVEN THE CHANCE. TAKE THE TIME AND SPEAK TO ANY OR ALL OF THEM AND YOU WILL SEE THAT EVERY ONE OF THEM HAS A TESTIMONY THAT SUPPORTS HOW WELL-DESERVING MY DAD IS OF THIS HONOR.

AS HIS DAUGHTER, I HAVE THE UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE TO TALK ABOUT WHAT AN HONOR, PRIVILEGE, AND BLESSING IT HAS BEEN TO GROW UP UNDER THE GUIDANCE, TUTELAGE, AND LOVE OF THIS MAN. YOU SEE, WITH ALL THAT HE HAS BEEN TO THIS COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER, HE WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST, A FATHER. WITH CHIEF, THERE WAS NO DELINEATION BETWEEN HOME AND WORK! WE, AND LATER HIS GRANDCHILDREN, WERE ALWAYS WELCOME IN HIS SPACE. WE GOT TO SEE THE INNER WORKINGS OF WHAT CHIEF DID AND MET MANY INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE PROCESS. IT WAS UNDERSTOOD, THOUGH, THAT IF HE WERE IN A MEETING, AND ONE OF US NEEDED HIM (ESPECIALLY THE GRANDCHILDREN, NO MATTER HOW INSIGNIFICANT ANYBODY ELSE THOUGHT THE REASON WAS!), HE DEMANDED TO BE NOTIFIED SO THAT HE COULD PAUSE HIS MEETING TO BE THERE FOR US. DON'T GET IT TWISTED...WE KNEW OUR PLACE IN HIS WORK WORLD, BUT HE ALSO MADE SURE THAT WE KNEW THAT THERE WAS NO ONE OR NO THING THAT MATTERED TO HIM MORE THAN US! AS A CHILD, THAT WAS SIGNIFICANT IN MOLDING OUR PSYCHE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE! HE DID THAT FOR US, HE DID THAT FOR OUR FRIENDS AND EXTENDED FAMILY, AND HE DID THAT FOR MANY MEMBERS OF THE RISING STARS YOUTH STEEL ORCHESTRA...ALL CHILDREN MATTERED TO HIM! FATHERHOOD MATTERS TO HIM, STILL! HE HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL! THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE TODAY!

CHIEF HAS NEVER BEEN A RELIGIOUS MAN...AND HE STILL ISN'T. BUT LET ME TELL YOU THAT HE HAS BEEN WALKING AND WORKING UNDER THE ANOINTING OF THE MOST HIGH ALL HIS LIFE! IF YOU KNOW HIM, YOU KNOW HIS MOTHER, AFFECTIONATELY CALLED MISS DOLLY, WAS A PRAYING WOMAN. THEY WERE POOR IN MONEY AND MATERIAL THINGS, BUT SHE WAS A PRAYER WARRIOR WHO KEPT THE FAITH AND MADE SURE HER CHILDREN WERE RICH IN LOVE, TENACITY, DETERMINATION, STRENGTH OF MIND, AND A HEALTHY SENSE OF FAMILY (WHETHER BY BLOOD OR BY CHOICE). ARMED WITH THE EXAMPLE OF HIS MOTHER, CHIEF CONTINUED HER LEGACY OF LOVE FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY, EXCELLING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE AND BEYOND ANYTHING SHE EVER PRAYED FOR! SHE USED TO SAY "THE LORD WILL PROVIDE" AND PROVIDE HE DID. THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE TODAY!

NOTHING IS SO COMPLICATED THAT IT CANNOT BE SIMPLIFIED BY HARD WORK! THIS PHILOSOPHY IS NOT ONLY THE RISING STARS MOTTO...THIS WAS SOMETHING INSTILLED IN US SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN. WE WERE TAUGHT THAT HARD WORK WAS NOT TO BE SHUNNED BUT RESPECTED, IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE. SIMILARLY, WE WERE TAUGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SMART BY SETTING GOALS AND PUTTING IN THE HARD WORK NECESSARY TO ATTAIN OUR GOALS. THAT MEANT GETTING AN EDUCATION, BE IT VIA AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING, THE MILITARY, A TRADE SCHOOL, OR THE WORKFORCE. WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, HE SAID TO EDUCATE YOURSELF! CHIEF WAS FROM SAVAN AND GARDEN STREET...HE AND MY MOM (FROM POLLYBERG) STARTED FROM THE BOTTOM, VERY HUMBLE BEGINNINGS. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THEY GOT EDUCATED, WORKED HARD, SACRIFICED, AND BUILT THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH WE STAND TODAY. WHEN YOU GET A CHANCE, READ THE BILL PUT FORTH BY SENATOR GITTENS. YOU WILL SEE THAT, AS COMPLICATED AS IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN AND DESPITE ALL THE CHALLENGES HE HAD TO HAVE FACED, CHIEF PUT IN THE WORK! TO THIS DAY, I STILL REGARD AND ADMIRE HIM AS THE SMARTEST HUMAN BEING I HAVE EVER KNOWN. EQUIPPED WITH STREET SENSE, BOOK SENSE, AND COMMON SENSE, CHIEF APPLIED HIS LEGAL BRILLIANCE, QUICK WIT, ANALYTICAL SKILLS, AND KEEN SENSE OF FAIRNESS ACROSS SEVERAL DISCIPLINES, MAKING HIM RELATABLE TO, AND RESPECTED BY, INDIVIDUALS OF ALL AGES FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. CHIEF, YOUR ENTIRE LIFE HAS BEEN ABOUT SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS COMMUNITY AND IT HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED! THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE TODAY!

**VERNE HODGE IS A VIRGIN ISLANDER, A CARIBBEAN MAN, A MAN OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE, A PUBLIC SERVANT;
HE'S A LYRICIST, A LOVER OF KAISO, A COMEDIAN, A CHESS PLAYER, AN AUTHOR, A TEACHER;
A HUMBLE HUMAN WITH A DEEP AND ABIDING LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE, HIS COMMUNITY, AND HIS FAMILY;
A FEARLESS AND STAUNCH DEFENDER OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!
THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE TODAY!**

WE ARE THANKFUL TO SENATOR KENNY GITTENS FOR SPEARHEADING THIS HONOR FOR OUR DAD, AND TO THE STAFF OF SEN. CARLA JOSEPH'S OFFICE, ESPECIALLY Ms. BERKELEY, FOR GUIDING US THROUGH THE LOGISTICS OF THIS PROCESS.

WE ARE THANKFUL TO ALL OF YOU WHO SHOWED UP TODAY, IN PERSON AND VIA THE LIVESTREAM, TO SHOW YOUR LOVE AND SUPPORT FOR CHIEF.

WE ARE THANKFUL, CHIEF, THAT YOU FINALLY AGREED, AT 90 YEARS OLD, TO ACCEPT AND APPEAR IN PERSON TO RECEIVE THIS ESTEEMED ACCOLADE! WE ARE MOST THANKFUL, THOUGH, THAT YOU HAVE BEEN BLESSED TO BE HERE WITH US, ALIVE AND KICKING! THE JUDGE VERNE A. HODGE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS...YOU DESERVE THIS! WE LOVE YOU AND ARE SO VERY PROUD OF YOU!

BLESSINGS TO YOU ALL AND THANK YOU!

-SUBMITTED BY BRIDGET R. HODGE (DAUGHTER OF HONOREE)