



Government of  
The Virgin Islands of the United States

**VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
OFFICE OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER



**SIDNEY ELSKOE**

**Assistant Police Commissioner**

November 22, 2023

Honorable Senator Ray Fonseca  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Hospitals & Human Services  
35<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands  
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Dear Senator Fonseca,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing in response to your recent invitation to provide testimony representing the Virgin Islands Police Department regarding the following topic:

*Bill No. 35-0173, An Act amending title 5 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 201, by adding a subchapter V enacting the Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act to provide a mechanism for a newborn infant to be relinquished to a safe environment, for the parents of the newborn infant to remain anonymous if they choose and avoid civil or criminal liability for the act of relinquishing the newborn infant, sponsored by Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.*

Regretfully, I am writing to deliver my sincere apologies for being unable to attend the upcoming Senate Hearing. The Hearing conflicts with a prior commitment that was established well in advance of the invitation. I am scheduled to attend the upcoming Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP) Intersessional Meeting on December 5th through December 9th in Miami, Florida.

Please accept my apology for any inconvenience this may cause. I value the time and effort that has gone into crafting this important Bill and am willing to work with the Senate on this and any law enforcement related matters in the future. I have attached testimony in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Sidney Elskoe  
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**THIRTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S.  
VIRGIN ISLANDS  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS & HUMAN  
SERVICES**

**CHAIR: RAY FONSECA**

**ST. THOMAS, USVI**

**U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2023**

On behalf of the Honorable Ray A. Martinez, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department, I submit this testimony in enthusiastic support of Bill No. 35-0173, the Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr. This important legislation proposes to amend title 5 of the Virgin Islands Code, chapter 201, by adding a subchapter V to provide a mechanism for a newborn infant to be relinquished to a safe environment, allowing parents to remain anonymous if they choose and avoid civil or criminal liability for the act of relinquishing the newborn infant.

The Virgin Islands Police Department commends Senator Bolques for his commitment to the safety and well-being of our community, especially our most vulnerable members. This proposed legislation aligns with our collective responsibility to protect the welfare of infants and support parents facing difficult circumstances.

According to data from the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Safe Haven laws have proven effective in preventing unsafe infant abandonment. These laws establish safe and legal options for parents who feel unable to care for their

newborns, encouraging them to make responsible choices rather than resorting to potentially dangerous alternatives.

The Child Welfare Information Gateway reports that, as of January 2022, all 50 states in the United States have enacted Safe Haven laws, leading to the safe relinquishment of thousands of infants. The data highlights the success of these laws in providing a viable alternative to unsafe abandonment, preserving the lives of countless newborns, and sparing parents from the legal consequences of desperate actions.

By enacting the Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act, the U.S. Virgin Islands can join the broader national effort to protect newborns and support parents in crisis. The proposed legislation offers a compassionate and pragmatic approach, providing a legal framework for parents to make responsible choices without fear of legal repercussions, ensuring the safety of the child and offering much-needed support to parents in crisis.

In conclusion, Commissioner Ray A. Martinez and the Virgin Islands Police Department wholeheartedly endorse Bill No. 35-0173, the Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act. We urge the esteemed members of this Committee to consider the positive impact this legislation can have on our community's most vulnerable members and to support its passage.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter, and we appreciate your commitment to the well-being of the residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands.