



GOVERNMENT OF
THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



VIRGIN ISLANDS FIRE and EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

"Providing Safety, Service, and Satisfaction"

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December 1, 2023

The Honorable Ray Fonseca
Chairman
Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services
Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie
P.O. Box 1690
St. Thomas, VI 00804

Dear Chairman Fonseca,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill 35-0173, An Act amending title 5 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 201, by adding subchapter V to include the Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act. This crucial legislation represents a significant step forward in safeguarding the lives of newborns and ensuring their welfare in our community.

As a concerned citizen deeply committed to the well-being of our society, I believe that every infant deserves a safe and secure start in life. Unfortunately, instances occur where desperate mothers find themselves in situations where they are unable to care for their newborns due to various reasons such as fear, lack of resources, or challenging circumstances. These situations can lead to tragic outcomes if there aren't safe and anonymous options available for mothers to relinquish their newborns without fear of legal repercussions.

Bill 35-0173 offers a compassionate and practical solution to address this issue by establishing Safe Haven locations where a distressed parent can leave an infant, typically within a few days of birth, without fear of facing legal consequences. These Safe Havens, equipped with trained personnel and resources, provide a secure environment for the child's immediate care, and ensure the proper channels for their well-being, including medical attention and a pathway to adoption by suitable families.

The enactment of this bill not only protects the lives of newborns but also supports mothers who find themselves in incredibly challenging situations. It provides them with a viable alternative to dangerous, life-threatening methods of abandonment and encourages them to make a responsible choice for their child's future. It also recognizes the complexity of situations that lead to such difficult decisions and offers a humane alternative, devoid of judgment or punitive

measures. It is an opportunity for us as a community to extend our support and understanding to those facing unimaginable challenges.

Research and data from jurisdictions that have implemented similar legislation have consistently shown the positive impact of safe haven laws. These laws have led to a significant reduction in instances of newborn abandonment, thereby saving lives and preventing tragic outcomes. By passing Bill 35-0173, we have the chance to replicate these successful outcomes within our own community.

Moreover, the Safe Haven Newborn Protection Act aligns with our fundamental values of compassion and care for the most vulnerable members of our society. It upholds the principle that every infant deserves a chance at life and a loving, nurturing environment, regardless of the circumstances surrounding their birth.

I urge each member of this esteemed legislative body to support and pass Bill 35-0173. By doing so, we can demonstrate our commitment to protecting innocent lives and providing a safety net for both newborns and their distressed parents in our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital issue. Your support of this legislation will undoubtedly make a profound difference in the lives of our community's most vulnerable members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victor Adams', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Victor Adams

EMS Chief St. Thomas- St. John