

**BILL NO. 35-0271**

**Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands**

**May 31, 2024**

An Act amending title 20 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 43, subchapter I by adding a section 494b establishing school speed zones, signage, and enforcement measures to promote student and pedestrian safety near schools

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**PROPOSED BY:** Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

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1       **WHEREAS**, the safety of students and pedestrians is of the utmost concern in school  
2 zones where there is traffic from motorcars, trucks, motorcycles, and busses;

3       **WHEREAS**, the single primary cause of accidents is vehicles exceeding speed limits in  
4 the school zones;

5       **WHEREAS**, a collaboration between the Virgin Islands Department of Education and  
6 the Virgin Islands Police Department can establish speed limits for each school, to promote  
7 safety to be known as school speed zones;

8       **WHEREAS**, the proper signage in the school zones can alert drivers of the appropriate  
9 speed limits and establish a school speed zone;

10       **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands Police Department shall enforce the proper speed limits  
11 in the school speed zones;

1           **WHEREAS**, the Department of Education and the Virgin Islands Police Department  
2 shall initiate a public education campaign to promote school speed zone safety; Now,  
3 Therefore,

4 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:*

5           **SECTION 1.** Title 20 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 43 is amended by adding a  
6 subchapter III to read as follows:

7 **“Subchapter III. School Speed Zone and Enforcement Act**

8           **§ 531.** This subchapter may be cited as the “School Speed Zone and Enforcement Act.”

9           **§ 532. Definitions**

10           As used in this subchapter, unless the context requires otherwise:

11           (1) “School Speed Zone” means a designated area within a specified distance from a  
12 school property boundary where vehicular speed limits are reduced below the standard limits  
13 for the road to enhance safety. These zones are active during specified hours that correspond  
14 to school operations, including but not limited to student arrival and departure times, and any  
15 other times when children are likely to be present.

16           (2) “School Zone Signage” means official signs erected by the Virgin Islands  
17 Department of Public Works after consultation with Virgin Islands Department of Education  
18 and the Virgin Islands Police Department. These signs indicate the beginning and end of a  
19 school speed zone, the applicable speed limit within the zone, and the hours of operation. The  
20 design, placement, and maintenance of these signs shall adhere to the standards established by  
21 the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works and any applicable federal guidelines.

22           (3) “Pedestrian” means any person traveling on foot, wheelchair, bicycle, skateboard,  
23 roller-skates, or similar means of non-vehicular movement, who may be using the roadway,  
24 sidewalks, crosswalks, or any paths adjacent to a school property within a school speed zone.

25           **§ 533. Establishment of School Speed Zones**

1           The Department of Education in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Police Department  
2 shall establish the boundaries for each school to determine its school speed zones. School speed  
3 zones must:

4           (1) be established in proximity to schools to enhance the safety of students and  
5 pedestrians during school hours and other designated times; and

6           (2) be established based on assessment that considers the following criteria:

7           (i) The proximity of school buildings to adjacent roadways;

8           (ii) Pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns, including peak times coinciding  
9 with school hours;

10           (iii) Historical accident data and reported near-misses involving students and  
11 vehicles; and

12           (iv) Road geometry, visibility, and existing speed limits in the vicinity of schools.

### 13 **§ 534. Enforcement Measures**

14           The Virgin Islands Police Department is responsible for enforcing the reduced speed  
15 limits within school speed zones, but law enforcement officers who are authorized to issue  
16 citations may issue a citation to a motorist who violates the school speed zone limit. The Virgin  
17 Islands Police Department shall provide adequate personnel for school speed zones as part of  
18 its traffic and monitoring duties.

### 19 **§ 535. Penalties**

20           (a) For a second offense, in addition to the fine provided for in 20 V.I.C. § 512, the  
21 driver may have two points deducted from their driver's license and must complete a driver  
22 safety course focused on the dangers of speeding in school zones.

23           (b) For a third offense, in addition to the fine, the driver may be required to perform  
24 ten hours of community service, focusing on traffic safety education, or work on a school safety

1 improvement project, or any other school-related community service options as determined by  
2 the Department of Education.

3 (c) Fines are doubled for when a driver has exceeded the school zone speed limit by  
4 double the speed limit.

5 (d) The license of individuals committing more than three offenses within a two-year  
6 period must be suspended for a period not to exceed six months and fined the maximum fine  
7 provided for the.

8 **§ 536. Fines; collection**

9 Thirty-three and one-third percent of the fines collected from school zone speeding  
10 violations must be allocated to the Virgin Islands Police Department for traffic safety education  
11 programs, and improvements in school zone safety infrastructure and the remaining 33.3  
12 percent of the fines shall to the Department of Education to be used exclusively for career  
13 technical education schools, programs, or courses and 33.4 percent must be deposited into the  
14 District Public Road Fund.

15 **§ 537. Department of Education and Virgin Islands Police continuing obligations**

16 The Virgin Islands Police Department shall use all available technology, including speed  
17 cameras and radar, to enforce school zone speed limits. The Department of Education, in  
18 collaboration with the Virgin Islands Police Department, shall conduct periodic reviews of  
19 school zone safety measures and propose adjustments as necessary and shall disseminate  
20 communication with the public about the penalties for speeding in school zones.

21 **SECTION 2.** Title 20 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 43, subchapter I, section 512 is  
22 amended by adding a new provision to the Schedule of Fees as follows:

23 (a) Schedule of Fees for Speeding Violations in School Zones:

VIC	Violation Description	1st Offense Fee	2nd Offense Fee	3rd Offense Fee
T.20, 535	Exceeding speed limit in school zones	\$100.00	\$200.00	\$300.00

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2           **SECTION 3.** (a) The sum of \$500,000 is appropriated in the fiscal year ending  
3 September 30, 2024, from the Transportation Trust Fund to Virgin Islands Department of  
4 Public Works to implement and administer the provisions of this act, including signage  
5 installation and public education campaigns.

6           (b) The funds must be exclusively used for the purchase and installation of signage to  
7 designate school speed zones at all schools within the Virgin Islands, to include speed limit  
8 signs, pedestrian crossing signs, flashing warning lights, and any other signage necessary to  
9 effectively implement the “School Speed Zone and Enforcement Act.”

10          (c) The Department of Public Works, in collaboration with the Department of  
11 Education and the Virgin Islands Police Department are responsible for determining the  
12 specific signage needs for each school based on the criteria established.

13          (d) The Department of Education and Virgin Islands Police Department shall  
14 determine speed limits for school speed zones. Reduced speed limits must be established  
15 during designated hours, such as arrival and dismissal times. The timeframes during which the  
16 reduced speed limits are enforced must be clearly communicated through signage and other  
17 public outreach efforts.

18          (e) School speed zone signage must:

19               (1) be installed in a visible and conspicuous manner to indicate the presence of  
20 school speed zones;

21               (2) include the designated reduced speed limit and any additional information  
22 necessary to inform motorists of the school zone boundaries; and

1 (3) must comply with applicable traffic regulations and standards for size, color,  
2 and visibility.

3 (f) Not later than nine months after the Department of Public Works receives the  
4 appropriation, it shall submit a report to the Legislature of the Virgin Islands and the  
5 Department of Education outlining:

6 (1) The progress of the signage installation project, including the number of  
7 schools outfitted with new signs;

8 (2) A breakdown of expenditures to date; and

9 (3) Any challenges encountered during the implementation phase and the  
10 measures taken to address them.

11 (g) The Department of Education in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Police  
12 Department shall conduct public education and awareness campaigns to inform the community  
13 about school speed zones, reduced speed limits, and the importance of adhering to the  
14 regulations. These campaigns may include distributing educational materials, holding  
15 community meetings, conducting school outreach programs, and utilizing other effective means  
16 of communication.

### 17 **BILL SUMMARY**

18 This bill establishes comprehensive measures to enhance the safety of students and  
19 pedestrians in school zones across the Virgin Islands by establishing the “School Speed Zone  
20 and Enforcement Act.” It appropriates \$500,000 from the Transportation Trust Fund to the  
21 Department of Public Works for the procurement and installation of necessary signage, thereby  
22 clearly delineating school speed zones. The bill also outlines a collaborative framework  
23 involving the Department of Education and the Virgin Islands Police Department to establish  
24 and enforce reduced speed limits during specified hours, along with promoting road safety  
25 through public education campaigns. Additionally, the bill revises the Schedule of Fees to

1 include penalties for speeding violations within these zones, with the dual aim of deterrence  
2 and raising awareness about the importance of adhering to speed limits to protect school  
3 communities.

4 **BR23-0615/April 4, 2024/CBM**