



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## RAPHAEL O. WHEATLEY SKILL CENTER

*Post-Secondary Career & Technical Education Institute*

**Dr. Mario Francis: Principal**

**P. O. Box 9337-St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00801**

**Tel: (340) 998-2730**

**[mario.francis@vide.vi](mailto:mario.francis@vide.vi)**

October 30, 2024

Honorable Angel Bolques Jr.  
Office of Senator-At-Large  
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands  
P.O. Box 1690 St. Thomas, VI 00804

Dear Honorable Senator Bolques Jr:

As Principal of the Raphael O. Wheatley Skill Center (ROWSC), a post-secondary career and technical education institute, I, Mario Francis, am writing to express strong support for Bill 35-0271, sponsored by Honorable Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques Jr. This proposed legislation, titled the “School Speed Zone and Enforcement Act,” outlines comprehensive measures to enhance safety for students and pedestrians in school zones across the Virgin Islands.

The bill’s objective to create safer school zones is vital for protecting our students, staff, and community members as they navigate these areas. Improved safety will contribute to a more secure environment, which is essential for the well-being and peace of mind of students and families alike.

In addition to addressing safety, Bill 35-0271 proposes allocating 33.33% of the fines collected from speed zone violations to the Department of Education, with exclusive use for the territory’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. This allocation would provide a much-needed infusion of funds into CTE programs like ours at ROWSC, supporting the growth and enhancement of essential skills-training opportunities for students throughout the Virgin Islands.

This additional funding would enable programs like ours to broaden our reach, upgrade our facilities and equipment, and expand training options to align with industry standards, better preparing students for employment and professional advancement. Given the vital role CTE programs play in equipping students with the skills necessary for the modern workforce, the passage of Bill 35-0271 would be a valuable investment in the future of our students, our communities, and our economy.

For these reasons, I fully support the enactment of Bill 35-0271 and commend Senator Bolques for his commitment to both student safety and the advancement of Career and Technical Education programs in the Virgin Islands.

Respectfully,

Mario Francis, Ph.D.

“Building Skills, Expanding Horizons”