

Good morning, Chairman Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, other members of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, and senators of the 35th Legislature.

My name is Adriana Veliz, a resident of the Virgin Islands and a United States citizen since 2018, but I am originally from Venezuela.

Let me begin by thanking you for the opportunity to testify in favor of bill number 35-0013, An act amending Title 20 Virgin Islands Code, Part II, Chapter 35, relating to the issuance of operators' licenses and identification cards to allow applicants to obtain limited local purpose identification cards and operators' licenses without providing a particular federally required document.

As a Venezuelan who came to the United States in 1998 legally with a Visa but with no driver's license for several years, I know firsthand how hard it is to run personal errands, drop off kids to school, make it on time to work, to doctors' appointments, etc., without a car.

I was fortunate enough to have someone driving me around, but after some time, they began to rush me while I ran my errands and showed me signs of frustration and anger. I was tired of feeling like a burden to others. All of that changed from the moment I received my license. As an immigrant who knows the difficulties of starting a new life in a new country, and embracing a new culture, while at the same time learning a new language and all the laws that must be respected and followed, I understand the importance of this Bill.

I appear before you today to support the Driver's Safety Bill because, in my opinion, this bill would make our roadways safer for drivers and pedestrians. There's a need for immigrants in their process of legal status who have jobs and family members who need to be on time for school, get to work, go grocery shopping, etc. I am sure that some of them are driving without insurance, without a license, and taking the risk because they need to support themselves and their families. I am here in support of my fellow Venezuelans also, who need this bill to pass for them to improve their lives and feel safer driving in the Virgin Islands because in case anything happens, the vehicle has been legally registered and insured and they can provide all the information requested by the officers.

I appreciate Senator Samuel Carrion addressing this issue by introducing this Bill No.35-0013. In addition, I urge senators who have not yet signed on to support this proposed legislation to do so. A vote for this law would result in safer roads for everyone.