Good Afternoon, Senator Gittens and Senator Fonseca, Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, and all senators present. My name is LaVonne Colasuonno, I am a board-certified Family Nurse Practitioner with a specialty in Women’s Health. Thank you for inviting me to testify on Bill No. 35-0046, regarding the amendment of Title 20 Virgin Islands Code, part II, chapter 43, subchapter I to establish parking for expectant mothers or mothers with newborns.

Over the last decade there has been a marked increase in the number of retailers that have implemented “stork parking” or “expectant mother parking”. This has become more prominent across the United States, spreading from many countries in Europe where it is very common to provide this reserved parking to accommodate mothers during the third trimester of pregnancy, those with disability during pregnancy, and families with small children under the age of one. The parking spaces are located close to the entrance of the building and are a bit wider than the standard parking space, equivalent to the specs of handicapped parking. This is to accommodate for the space needed to open the vehicle doors as wide as possible to allow the pregnant mother to get in and out safely and comfortably, and for those with small children, to get the child and/or carseat in and out the car safely, especially those with twins and multiples.

Expectant mother parking is designed to address and alleviate the difficulties pregnant women and new parents face such as difficulty walking long distances during pregnancy and handling their own possessions while keeping their children safe. As a new mother myself, I can personally speak to the difficulties of getting in and out of the car while pregnant when someone has parked too close, struggling to get a baby and/or carseat out if you cannot open the door wide enough and making the transition from solo shopping to shopping, loading the goods, stroller and baby into the car.

The permit or placard for this specially assigned parking is usually obtained through the department of motor vehicle via an application for temporary disability parking privileges accompanied by a physician’s statement. I have listed the fees attached to this designated car park for several states and a few other islands. After researching the fee for temporary disability parking placards for 25 states: 12 states offer the placard for free of charge, 11 states off the placard for six dollars or less, and Tennessee and Florida are the most expensive at $10 and $15 respectively. The cost in BVI is $10, Hawaii is $12, and Puerto Rico is $15. This shows that our current fee of $10 for a temporary placard is reasonable in comparison.

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| Delaware-No Charge | South Carolina $1 | Tennessee $10 |
| Oregon-No Charge | North Dakota $3 | Florida $15 |
| Kentucky-No Charge | New Jersey $4 |  |
| Maine-No Charge | Colorado $5 |  |
| New Mexico-No Charge | Ohio-$5 | Hawaii--$12 |
| West Virginia-No Charge | Louisiana $5 | Puerto Rico--$15 |
| Nevada-No Charge | Minnesota $5 | BVI --$10 |
| South Dakota-No Charge | Arizona $5 | USVI--$10 |
| Illinois-No charge | North Carolina $5 |  |
| California-No Charge | Virginia $5 |  |
| Pennsylvania-No Charge | Wisconsin $6 |  |
| Maryland-No Charge |  |  |

The allocation for safe and convenient parking for pregnant women and families with small children is a great way to show concern for this special population, but should in no way, impose a financial burden. Overall, establishing parking for expectant mothers and families with small children up to one year of age is an excellent way to show support and acknowledge the challenges this population faces in day-to-day life and decrease the stress during routine errands, doctors’ appointments, ect., while also generating revenue for the territory. Thank you.