

**THIRTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S.
VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND
PUBLIC SAFETY
CHAIR: KENNETH L. GITTENS
ST. THOMAS, USVI
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT
THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2023**

Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, members of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety; other members of the 35th Legislature; and the listening and viewing audience. It is with favorable support we submit testimony on Bill #35-0046 - An Act amending 20 V.I.C to establish parking for expectant mothers or mothers with newborns. This bill, an important measure, would improve the quality of life and safety of many women and children in our community... the territory.

Pregnancy and childbirth are physically and emotionally demanding experiences that can have lasting effects on a woman's health and well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about one (1) in four (4) women experience some form of complication during pregnancy or delivery, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, infections, or

hemorrhage. These conditions can make it difficult or dangerous for pregnant women to walk long distances or carry heavy loads. Moreover, after giving birth, many women face challenges such as postpartum depression, breastfeeding difficulties, sleep deprivation, and chronic pain. These factors can also impair their mobility and comfort. States have varying rules and regulations; however, there are some states such as Georgia and Oklahoma that view pregnancy as a temporary disability. In those states, pregnant mothers are allowed a “Disability Pass” that is valid thirty (30) days past their projected due date. In 2017, the General Assembly of Pennsylvania passed House Bill No. 1038 which was an Act providing for the creation of special parking spaces for pregnant women and for a penalty of a violation thereof.

By providing designated parking spaces for expectant mothers or mothers with newborns, we can ease some of the burdens and risks that these women face every day. We can also show our respect and appreciation for their contribution to our society and our future. This bill would not only benefit the women themselves, but their families, employers, and customers. More importantly, it would reduce the stress and fatigue that can affect their productivity and performance at work; and increase their access to essential services and facilities, such as health care, education, shopping, and recreation.

This bill is not a novel or radical idea... it is necessary. In fact, many states and territories in the United States have already enacted similar legislation to provide parking accommodations for pregnant women or new mothers. For example, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and Guam have all passed laws that require public or private entities to reserve parking spaces for this population group. These laws have been well received and implemented by various stakeholders, such as government agencies, businesses, schools, hospitals, malls, airports, and parks.

Therefore, it is without reservations we support the passing of Bill #35-0046 and urge you to join the ranks of progressive and compassionate jurisdictions that value and protect the health and dignity of women and children. This bill is a significant step towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for our mothers and babies. Thank you for your time and attention.