

Good afternoon Senator Gittens,

Please see attached Letter of Support of Bill 35-0178 from the Virgin Islands Justice Initiative. I will not be present at the hearing, however, Attorney J. Russell B. Pate will be present at the hearing and available to testify in his role as Special Advisor to the Virgin Islands Justice Initiative.

The Virgin Islands Justice Initiative is a 501(c)(3) legal non-profit organization. Our mission is focused on creating opportunities for the poor to succeed through economic justice and poverty law. We provide free legal representation, education, and resources for economic and social mobility.

We believe that everyone deserves a second chance and our Clean Slate Program helps youth and adults overcome the barriers of their past by providing them with a clean slate. Our Teen Education and Criminal Deterrence Project partners with the Office of the Territorial Public Defender to provide educational opportunities for teenagers in grades 7-10 to learn from attorneys how seemingly innocent behavior could actually be criminal in nature. The goal of this program is to empower youth with the agency to make good decisions that can change the trajectory of their lives.

More information about our organization is available on our website at [vijustice.org](http://vijustice.org).

Warmest regards,

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**Casey Payton** (she/her)  
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