

April 14, 2025

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Hubert Frederick

Chairman, Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture

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ST. CROIX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON BILL 36-0019

Dear Chairman Frederick:

The St. Croix Chamber of Commerce opposes Bill 36-0019, which aims to prohibit the imposition of surcharges for the use of credit cards or debit cards in the territory. While the intentions underlying the bill—presumably the lowering of consumer costs—are laudable, the Chamber prefers a more free market-based approach to lowering costs.

First, businesses are not imposing surcharges for the sake of charging customers more. The business community has for many years suffered from crushing inflation, an anti-business approach to government, and high credit card processing and other related fees. By imposing surcharges, businesses are simply passing along the high fees already imposed upon them by the major banks and card companies.

Second, the bill as written would—quite ironically—actually increase costs paid by consumers. If enacted, the bill would force businesses to absorb the exorbitant credit card fees imposed by the credit card companies, which would simply encourage the “baking in” of these fees into prices in order to offset costs. This does not further the bill’s stated goal of reducing costs.

Third, if consumers do not like surcharges, the market will likely punish businesses that impose them. Put another way, if consumers do not like surcharges, they will forego spending at businesses that impose surcharges and choose instead to patronize businesses that do not. The problem—to the extent there is one—will resolve itself.

St. Croix businesses are currently reeling from the effects of the economy. Adding burdensome compliance regulations to their plate is not the answer at this time.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Akeel St. Jean

Akeel St. Jean, Esq.

Chairman