

BILL NO. 36-0194

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

October 27, 2025

An act urging the United States Congress and the Office of the United States Trade Representative to expand and modernize the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to further support economic growth and development in the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean region

PROPOSED BY: Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

1 **WHEREAS**, the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), originally enacted through the
2 Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) in 1983 and expanded by the Caribbean
3 Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) in 2000, was designed to promote economic
4 development and stability in the Caribbean region through preferential duty-free access to the
5 U.S. market;

6 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands, as an unincorporated territory of the United States,
7 occupies a unique position as both an integral part of the nation and a vital Caribbean partner,
8 serving as a strategic bridge for hemispheric trade, cultural exchange, and regional diplomacy;

9 **WHEREAS**, as a participant in the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the Virgin Islands has
10 benefited from trade preferences that support key industries such as rum production, light
11 manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, and marine-based commerce, thereby stimulating local
12 employment and investment;

13 **WHEREAS**, while the Virgin Islands is not classified as a beneficiary country under the
14 Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act due to its territorial status, the territory nonetheless
15 shares aligned economic interests with the Caribbean region and remains a strategic

1 stakeholder in regional trade development, policy integration, and sectoral cooperation under
2 the broader CBI framework;

3 **WHEREAS**, the global economy has evolved significantly since the original enactment
4 of the CBI, and modernization is now needed to incorporate emerging priorities such as digital
5 services, renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable manufacturing, and fair
6 labor practices;

7 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands and the broader Caribbean region remain highly
8 vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, hurricanes, and supply
9 chain shocks, and would benefit from expanded CBI provisions that incentivize green
10 infrastructure, carbon-neutral development, and economic resilience;

11 **WHEREAS**, the impending expiration of the CBTPA on September 30, 2030, presents
12 a critical opportunity for the United States to reaffirm and strengthen its long-term economic
13 commitment to the Caribbean region, including the Virgin Islands; and

14 **WHEREAS**, equitable engagement of U.S. territories and Caribbean nations in any
15 modernization of the CBI is essential to ensure the program fosters shared prosperity, regional
16 cohesion, and meaningful opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); Now,
17 Therefore,

18 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

19 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands urges the United States Congress to
20 modernize and permanently reauthorize the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Caribbean Basin
21 Trade Partnership Act to reflect 21st-century economic realities, including support for digital
22 services, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, climate adaptation, and small business
23 development.

24 **SECTION 2.** The Legislature further urges that any modernization effort explicitly
25 include the Virgin Islands as a stakeholder and partner, with opportunities for direct
26 participation and benefit under all CBI-related frameworks, policies, and review processes.

1 **SECTION 3.** The Legislature encourages the Office of the United States Trade
2 Representative to consult with the Virgin Islands and relevant Caribbean stakeholders to ensure
3 equitable implementation and policy alignment under the revised CBI framework.

4 **SECTION 4.** The Legislature supports the continuation of trade preference programs
5 that promote environmental sustainability, labor protections, regional cooperation, and long-
6 term economic stability across the Caribbean Basin.

7 **SECTION 5.** The President of the Legislature shall transmit certified copies of this
8 resolution to the President of the United States, the United States Trade Representative, the
9 President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of
10 Representatives, and the Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress.

BILL SUMMARY

12 This bill urges the United States Congress to modernize and permanently reauthorize the
13 Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), including the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act
14 (CBTPA), to reflect economic realities and priorities such as digital services, renewable energy,
15 advanced manufacturing, climate adaptation, and small business development. The bill also
16 calls for the inclusion of the Virgin Islands as a direct stakeholder in all CBI-related policy
17 discussions and implementation processes.

18 BR25-0733/September 10, 2025/KEH