

## **Testimony to the 36th Legislative Body in Support of Bill No. 36-0049**

### **Department of Education School Monitors**

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**Good morning,**

Honorable Senator Kurt Vialet, Chairman, Committee on Education and Workforce Development,

Honorable Members of the 36th Legislative Body, fellow testifiers, and listening audience,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Bill No. 36-0049 regarding hazardous duty pay for School Monitors. My name is Kevin Dowdy, and I have proudly served as a School Monitor for the Department of Education for 17 years at St. Croix Central High School. I am joined today by my colleague, Lawrence Benjamin, who has also served as a School Monitor for nine years. Together, we are here to represent our fellow colleagues and to explain why the duties of School Monitors qualify as hazardous.

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## **Support for Bill No. 36-0049**

### **De-Escalation Training**

We, the monitors, fully support the training provisions outlined in Bill No. 36-0049. We believe it is essential that all administrators receive the same training as the monitors. This training should include, at a minimum, de-escalation and safety techniques, along with any other necessary training to ensure the safety of staff, students, and visitors on campus. It is important for administrators to have a clearer understanding of how monitors are trained to intervene and de-escalate situations effectively.

Bill No. 36-0049 represents an important step forward for us monitors, who will be operating under the Bureau of School Security. It will help us enhance the skills we have already acquired and provide valuable guidance to navigate the challenges we face daily.

The children and parents of today are very different from those of the past. As the frontline of school safety, monitors play a critical role in maintaining a secure environment. The community

must understand that our job is to ensure everyone returns home safely at the end of each day — including ourselves and our families.

We respectfully ask that administration and the Department of Education fully support their School Monitors in this important work.

### **Hazardous Duties**

We strongly support the proposed amendments in Bill No. 36-0049, which seek to provide hazardous duty pay for School Monitors. This bill clearly outlines the various roles, responsibilities, and expectations of School Monitors, and proposes necessary changes to Title 3, Chapter 25, Section 559.

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### **Incidents Demonstrating Hazardous Duty**

The following incidents underscore the dangers inherent in the School Monitor role:

- **May 1997:** A Central High School student was fatally shot by another student in the school gymnasium over an alleged unpaid gambling debt.
- **January 1999:** Two 14-year-olds were shot near Charlotte Amalie High School by a 16-year-old as school was ending.
- **October 1999:** A former Central High School student was stabbed in the chest outside the gymnasium.
- **June 2004:** A student was shot and killed at St. Croix Educational Complex; the weapon recovered was a shotgun.
- **February 2007:** A 16-year-old male was shot in the chest at Charlotte Amalie High School.
- **March 2009:** Students physically assaulted a School Monitor.
- **February 2010:** An eighth-grader was stabbed multiple times at Arthur A. Richards Junior High School.
- **April 2010:** Students attacked a School Monitor.
- **May 2013:** Two high school students were stabbed during a fight at CAHS.
- **2014:** A School Monitor was beaten with her two-way radio by a parent.
- **February 2015:** Two individuals were carjacked at gunpoint on the Educational Complex campus.
- **2015/2016:** A School Monitor was pepper-sprayed while attempting to break up a fight.
- **July 2016:** Violence from the surrounding neighborhood spilled onto Joseph Gomez Elementary School's campus during summer camp, including a gunfight. This led to the installation of security fencing, although many campuses remain vulnerable to breaches.

- **January 2019:** A VIDE employee was stabbed following a physical altercation with a parent at Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School.
- **February 2023:** A BB gun drive-by at John H. Woodson Junior High School injured seven students.
- **October 2023:** A School Monitor and his family were threatened; students took photos of his in-laws' home and sent threatening messages. The FBI intervened, yet consequences for the students involved were minimal.
- **May 2025:** A School Monitor was assaulted by a sixth-grader at Alfredo Andrew Elementary School.

These incidents demonstrate the real and ongoing threats to the health, safety, and well-being of students, staff, and School Monitors alike. And those incidents are just a few — there are too many to mention.

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## Conclusion

In closing, we, the Department of Education School Monitors, respectfully thank the members of the 36th Legislative Body for your time, understanding, and consideration of Bill No. 36-0049. We urge your support in recognizing the hazardous nature of our work and the necessity of hazardous duty pay.

Thank you.

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[Honorable Chair this is the end of my testimony]