



36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Memorandum

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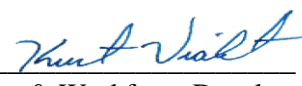
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TO: Mrs. Kurell A. Sheridan, JD
Executive Director
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

FROM: The Honorable Kurt A. Violet 
Chairman, Committee on Education & Workforce Development

DATE: March 27, 2026

RE: **Committee Report for Wednesday, March 25, 2026 Meeting**

Please find attached the report for the Committee on Education and Workforce Development (EWD) meeting held on **Wednesday, March 25, 2026** in the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix.

cc: All Senators
Chief Legal Counsel
Archive Division
Journal Division

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT **COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT**

The Committee on Education and Workforce Development convened its meeting on **Wednesday, March 25, 2026** in the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix.

Call to order:

Chairman, Senator Kurt A. Vialet called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m.

Committee Members Present:

Senator Kurt A. Vialet
Senator Avery L. Lewis
Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff
Senator Marise C. James
Senator Kenneth L. Gittens
Senator Franklin D. Johnson

Non-Committee Members Present:

Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Senator Clifford Joseph, Sr.
Senator Marvin Blyden

Committee Members Absent (Excused):

Senator Carla J. Joseph

Clerk/Timekeeper:

Janella John, Communications Manager

Committee Staff:

Gloryvee Christian-Krieger, Chief of Staff
Samanta Prentice, Chief Researcher

Sergeant-At-Arms:

Walton Jack, Jr. (STX)
Cpl. Dequan Bondieumaitre (STX)
Delvin Fleming (STT)

Protocol Officer:

Jervon Ottley
Myrna de Altier Pickard

Legislative Reporters:

Part I – Nadine Williams
Part II – Nataya Munoz
Part III – Joanne Samuel
Part IV – Vashti Barry
Part V – Tricia Sealey

Public Affairs/ Media:

Diana Cruz
Africah Harrigan
Barry Leerdam
Melissa Gustave
Bernard Matthew, Sr.
Chaunte Herbert
Kashief Hamilton
Jamal Potter
Chaunte Herbert
Alwyn Baptiste
Chantel Acosta

Block I – Redistricting of Virgin Islands Schools and Summer Maintenance

The Committee on Education and Workforce Development convened to receive testimony regarding the proposed redistricting of the Virgin Islands public school system and plans for summer maintenance. Testimony was provided by the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance (BSCM), and the Virgin Islands Board of Education. The American Federation of Teachers representatives from both districts were scheduled to testify; however, they were not present and did not submit testimony.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education testified in support of the proposed redistricting plan, describing it as a necessary and data-driven response to longstanding enrollment imbalances, population shifts, aging infrastructure, and rising operational costs. The Department emphasized that the current school system no longer aligns with where students reside, resulting in overcrowded classrooms in some schools, underutilization in others, and excessive transportation costs that negatively impact instructional time.

Further testimony from VIDE outlined that the redistricting plan is intended to realign student populations with residential zones, reduce transportation inefficiencies, and support equitable access to educational resources. The Department noted that the plan includes reopening the Arthur A. Richards K-8 School and transitioning away from the John H. Woodson Junior High School as part of a broader restructuring effort to modernize the education system and improve long-term sustainability.

The Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance provided testimony focused on facility readiness and infrastructure considerations. BSCM indicated that while redistricting can be successfully implemented, it is contingent upon ensuring that receiving schools meet health, safety, and capacity standards. The Bureau highlighted that although improvements have been made to several campuses, including significant remediation efforts at the Woodson site, ongoing maintenance challenges persist due to limited funding and staffing constraints.

BSCM further noted that current maintenance funding is insufficient to support both existing facilities and new infrastructure, emphasizing the need for increased investment to sustain operations. The Bureau also outlined its role in assessing school readiness, supporting facility transitions, and ensuring compliance with safety and building standards, while clarifying that it does not have decision-making authority over redistricting but serves in an advisory capacity.

The Virgin Islands Board of Education testified that it was not involved in the development of the redistricting plan but maintains an oversight role to ensure policies align with educational standards and equity requirements. The Board emphasized the need for transparency, stakeholder engagement, data-driven decision-making, and safeguards to protect student access to academic programs and resources. Additionally, the Board recommended the establishment of a centralized communication system, phased implementation, and continued monitoring to ensure equitable outcomes.

Block II – Bill No. 36-0207

The Committee also received testimony on Bill No. 36-0207, which proposes to require employers to grant parents or legal guardians of a child with a diagnosed disability two hours per month of paid leave to attend medical, therapeutic, or diagnostic appointments. Testifiers included representatives from the Department of Labor, Division of Personnel, Department of Health, and medical professionals, all of whom generally expressed support for the intent of the legislation.

The Division of Personnel testified in support of the bill, noting that it addresses a specific and practical need for working families while presenting minimal operational burden. However, the Division recommended clarifications related to enforcement provisions, definitions, and alignment with existing caregiver leave policies to ensure consistent implementation.

The Department of Health supported the measure from a public health perspective, emphasizing that allowing parents to attend medical appointments with their children improves continuity of care, supports early intervention, and enhances behavioral health outcomes. The Department further noted that the bill promotes stronger family engagement and contributes to better long-term health outcomes for children with disabilities.

Similarly, the Department of Labor expressed support for the bill's intent, highlighting its importance in supporting working families and improving workforce stability. The Department recommended practical amendments, including clearer definitions, phased implementation, and administrative guidelines to ensure the law is effective, enforceable, and fair to both employees and employers.

Additional supporting testimony emphasized the emotional, physical, and financial challenges faced by families of children with disabilities, underscoring the importance of policies that provide flexibility and support for caregiving responsibilities. The bill was widely recognized as a balanced approach that addresses these challenges while maintaining reasonable expectations for employers.

The Committee on Education and Workforce Development, chaired by Senator Kurt Vialet, advanced Bill No. 36-0207 on March 25, 2026, with a favorable vote. 6 yeas and one absent.

Committee requests:

All committee requests were fulfilled during the duration of the meeting.

Adjournment:

Chairman, Senator Kurt A. Vialet adjourned the Committee on Education and Workforce Development meeting at 4:32 p.m.