

Legislative Testimony Honoring Mr. Alva “Tumba” Swan

Ms Patricia Peets

Blessed afternoon, members of the Legislature, staff, family, and friends.

My name is Patricia Peets, and it is truly an honor to stand before you today as we celebrate and recognize Mr. Alva Swan—affectionately known as “Tumba”—for his outstanding contributions to our community. This honor is well-deserved, and I am blessed to be part of this moment, and grateful to Senator Marvin Blyden for moving to bestow this honor on Coach Tumba.

My first encounter with Mr. Swan came through my daughter. I admired him immediately for the love and dedication he showed to our youth through basketball. As an athlete myself, I understood the importance of that kind of mentorship. But it wasn’t until years later, in 2009, that my relationship with Tumba grew into the family bond we share today.

At that time, my son Jeremiah James was excelling in baseball and had just made the All-Star team. I thought he was at practice one day, but instead, he was on the basketball court shooting hoops with Tumba and Coach Cape. When I found out, I went to the court and asked Tumba to speak with Jeremiah. Tumba told him, “As soon as you turn nine, you’ll be right there with us.” That simple promise marked the beginning of a beautiful relationship between Tumba, my son, and me.

But Tumba is more than a coach. For families like mine, he became a father figure. He was there for me during some of my most difficult times—when I was caring for my mother with Alzheimer’s and battling my own struggles. He encouraged me, ensured Jeremiah and I were safe, and made sure we had what we needed to sustain our everyday life.

You see, Tumba is not just about basketball. He is about building character, instilling love, and shaping lives. He is deeply involved in the lives of our youth—not only on the court but in their schools and homes. His commitment goes beyond sports; it is about creating strong, responsible, and loving individuals.

I have watched Tumba groom children from a young age, teaching them discipline, teamwork, and self-respect. His basketball camps do more than teach

the game—they build character, foster love for oneself and others, and create a sense of community. For single parents like me, Tumba has been a breath of fresh air—a source of strength and support.

Basketball, under Tumba's guidance, is not just a game. It is a tool for growth, a way to teach life lessons, and a means to bring people together. I am so grateful that the Legislature has chosen to recognize his accomplishments and the profound impact he has had on the children of the Virgin Islands.

Tumba, this honor is well-deserved. I am blessed to have met you, to be part of your life, and to witness the love and dedication you pour into our youth. May God continue to bless you with strength, wisdom, and knowledge as you touch the lives of so many in our community.

Congratulations, Tumba. We love you.