

TESTIMONY ON BILL NO. 35-0226: A RESOLUTION HONORING JANET E. BROW-PHILLIPS

Greetings and Salutations! I am extremely honored and privileged to offer testimony today to concretely demonstrate unwavering support of Bill No. 36-0226, *“a resolution honoring and commending Mrs. Janet Brow Phillips for her outstanding achievements and significant contributions to the fields of education and culinary arts to the Virgin Islands community.”* I am Victor Somme III, and I am here today as a multigenerational Crucian educator and native of St. Croix, and not in my professional capacity as the Assistant Commissioner of Education. Janet is my dear friend, colleague, confidant, and sister.

I came to know Janet very well when she served as the District Director of Parent and Community Relations for the St. Croix School District during the DeJongh administration. Educationally, Janet was a stellar teacher at the Lew Muckle Elementary School for decades. Her students, all of whom are now adults, hold her in the highest regard and with the greatest respect. Her instruction was impactful, rigorous and relevant to the lives of her students.

Director Brow was well known for the creation, development and successful implementation of the very popular Parent University, a project wherein parents and guardians would meet monthly in the evening to receive instruction on navigating within the Virgin Islands of Department of Education; family counseling; learn effective methods for managing common behavioral challenges in schools and at home; strategies for advocating in matters of grading, assessment, curriculum standards, and academic achievement; healthy eating/living; etc. Expert guest speakers and presenters were invited from across all spectrums to educate parents in critical areas. I had the opportunity to present on several occasions on the topic of maladaptive behaviors and alternative education.

Parent University was ground breaking as Director Brow used federal funding from the District's annual Consolidated Grant to not only provide educational information, but also child care services, meals and transportation for parents to attend Parent University. She created a "no excuses" model for parent attendance. Additionally, Director Brow created parent (resource) rooms at all public schools in the St. Croix District. The purpose of parent rooms was to provide a space where parents could come to school, meet privately with teachers and/or school administrators, have a base to from which to volunteer, obtain information and materials, etc. The most popular parent room was the one at Claude O. Markoe Elementary School where one parent in particular, Juliet, lived and treated Claude O. Markoe as her kingdom. She was truly appreciative of Director Brow's initiative.

With respect to Janet's culinary masterpieces, I am very grateful to be one of her beneficiaries. Her culinary skills almost create manna from heaven, food of the gods! Her turkey wings are divine and her crab and rice is exquisite. Even Governor Bryan commented on her crab and rice at the most recent Crucian Festival Food Fair. My only complaint is that she refuses, refuses to take the crab out of the shell as I have frequently requested, and she comments that that "*is too much wuk!*" By the way, she still owes me 50 gallons of red peas soup!

The thought and care Janet puts into creating authentic Crucian culinary masterpieces is indeed a work of art and a delight to the palate. Her hands and her skills are a God-given talent. More importantly, Janet intimately understands and demonstrates the importance of the value of food **and** family and the role Crucian food plays traditionally. People come together to break bread in celebration, commiseration, and unity as is our tradition! Janet Brow Phillips gets it! She gets that food plays a crucial role in the cultural identity of the Crucian tradition. For that, she is most deserving of the honor and commendation this august body is bestowing upon her today.

I am extremely proud of Janet. With such a laudable tract record of public service, teaching, and masterful culinary skills, I have no hesitation in assenting to this honor as she epitomizes the essence of being Crucian!