

Good day.

I am here today to testify on Bill 36-0250, which seeks to amend Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 27, Section 717, Subsection (c). This amendment would insert language to ensure that the Government Employees' Retirement System "shall not reduce, revoke, or otherwise alter a member's service resulting from a default or delinquency on any loan or financial obligation made through or administered by the System. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the System from collection of outstanding debts through lawful means, provided such actions shall not alter the member's service. Service shall reflect the actual duration of government employment."

This legislation arose out of a situation brought to the attention of Senator Marise James by a constituent that she, in turn, brought to my attention. Subsequently, I discontinued an existing practice within the GERS that prevented members who are no longer employed by the government (or its agencies) from restoring contributions that were previously deducted to payoff delinquent loan obligations to the GERS. This discontinued past practice could have, effectively, resulted in a permanent loss of credited service.

Although I discontinued this standing practice administratively, the bill sponsor, understandably, desired to statutorily foreclose the possibility of its recurrence. I understand this instinct and it was a pleasure to work with Senator Marise James and her staff in reviewing and revising Bill 36-0250, which I fully support.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement on Bill 36-0250. I am prepared to answer any questions on this matter. Thank you.