

36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERAN AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Testimony in Support of the Resolution Honoring Mr. James Sasso
Submitted by Dr. Kyza A. Callwood

A blessed good afternoon to you, Honorable Avery L. Lewis, Chairman on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection; Vice Chairman Novelle E. Francis, Jr.; Senator Kenneth L. Gittens; Senator Ray Fonseca; Senator Alma Francis Heyliger; Senator Franklin D. Johnson; and Senator Carla J. Joseph along with your dedicated legislative staff and all those joining us via Facebook, YouTube, or television.

I am Dr. Kyza A. Callwood, and I appear before you to offer heartfelt testimony in strong support of Bill No. 36-0007, a resolution to honor Funeral Director James Sasso, as proposed by Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.

There's an old saying that reminds us: *"It's not how long we live, but how well we are remembered."* If that is true, then James Sasso has made it his life's mission to ensure that every person is remembered with dignity, compassion, and grace.

Before dedicating himself to funeral service, Mr. Sasso pursued a background in electrical engineering, a field rooted in precision, balance, and understanding systems that are often unseen. It's poetic, then, that he now applies that same depth of focus and quiet strength to navigating life's most delicate and emotional transitions. He has transformed the technical into the spiritual and turning structure into solace.

With over a decade of service as a Funeral Director and Certified Cremator Operator, Mr. Sasso has guided countless families through some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. And he does so not merely with technical skill, but with a reverence for the human experience that is rare and extraordinary. It is no surprise that he is regularly recognized as a Funeral Director of "Top Quality Excellence."

To place his service in a broader societal context, I draw from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which positions self-actualization at the pinnacle of human fulfillment. Mr. Sasso's work is not just a profession—it is a daily expression of actualized empathy. His role transcends logistics; it touches the spiritual and emotional foundation of families and communities. Through him, we see what it means to transform duty into purpose and compassion into legacy.

In that spirit, I humbly propose what I call the *Sasso Theory of Transitional Dignity* a guiding belief that the emotional strength of a community is directly impacted by the dignity we uphold in our farewell rituals. The manner in which we honor the departed shapes the way we carry forward—and individuals like Mr. Sasso are guardians of that sacred transition.

Now, I must add while many know Mr. Sasso for his calm presence and deep reverence, there is another side of him that brings just as much joy. He is a devoted family man, whose love and commitment at home reflect the same compassion he brings to his profession. And if you've ever had the pleasure of attending a social gathering with him, you'll quickly discover that beneath his composed demeanor is someone who can effortlessly light up a room. In those settings, the same gentleman who helps us navigate our deepest losses is also the one who

reminds us how to laugh again, often as the unexpected, yet beloved, comedic highlight of the evening.

This rare balance of strength and softness, professionalism and personality, grief, and grace is what makes Mr. Sasso a true community treasure.

Honorable Senators, in honoring Mr. James Sasso, we are not merely acknowledging a decade of excellent service. We are affirming the value of every soul he has helped celebrate, and every life he has uplifted through his sacred vocation. His example teaches us how to serve with heart, how to lead with humility, and how to live in a way that helps others find peace.

So today, I leave you with this: if you ever need a moment of comfort, a listening ear, or even just a good laugh—don't call 911, call 340-JAMES-SASSO. And more importantly, let us collectively do what is right. Let us enshrine his legacy in the record of this Senate and the heart of this Territory.

I respectfully urge this distinguished committee to unanimously pass this resolution not just for Mr. Sasso, but for every Virgin Islander who has found healing through his hands and hope through his heart.

Thank you, and may God bless you all in your continued commitment to honoring those who serve our Virgin Islands community with integrity, empathy, and unwavering care.

With humility and admiration,

Dr. Kyza A. Callwood