

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

BILL NO. 36 - 0191

Good morning, Senator, Angel L. Bolques, Jr, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection as well as the other Committee members, members of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, listening and viewing audience.

I am Delbert I. Phipps Sr., father and Retired Virgin Islands Police Officer, joining me is my wife Denise Phipps, as parents of our son Detective Delberth I. Phipps Jr. we are pleased to be present here today with other friends, colleague and family members to support this bill. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony on BILL NO. 36-0191 pertaining to an act honoring and commending Detective Delberth I. Phipps Jr. for his service with the Virgin Island Police Department and to the Virgin Island Community, by renaming the portion of Hospital Gade where it intersects with Veterans Drive, at the Alexander Farrelly Criminal Justice Complex, to the beginning of the Maude Proudfoot Drive, the "Delberth I. Phipps Jr. Street"

Delberth, Ian Phipps Jr. was born on St. Thomas Virgin Islands on June 17, 1981. He was the second of five children. He was also a product of the Public School System and a graduate of the Charlotte Amale High school.

In his earlier years, he began to express his interest in becoming a police officer. His interest intensified during the year of 2015, sometime in early 2016 the topic of becoming a police officer arose again, this was after I had retired from the police department. After much discussion, he was encouraged to follow his dreams and if law enforcement was his career choice of his interest, then he should pursuit it.

In 2016, after preparing and applying with the Department of Personnel, he was selected as a police recruit. Several months after satisfying all his requirements in the police academy, it was a very proud moment for us to see our son graduating and becoming a full-fledge member of the police force. As a recruit, he began to show his professional leadership qualities and his ability to carry out his assignments. I saw his growth as he was assigned to various units throughout the department. His work ethics were seen by his peers and documented by various supervisors which created a path for a young officer to become an instructor in the police academy while being assigned to the patrol division and other assignments in various special units.

Within six years of his career, Delberth Jr. was assigned to the Criminal Investigation Bureau. Once again, his performance was realized and shortly thereafter, he was reassigned to Homicide Task Force / Major Crime Unit, the highest assigned position of policing. This was an overwhelming proud moment, especially for me, as this reassignment was moving him into the very same office / position that I was assigned to for some eighteen years. Delberth took his profession very seriously. Whether on or off duty, he acted as if he was always on duty. On numerous occasions, I can recall saying to him, Junie, give the radio a break as transmissions from the 911 dispatchers can be heard all hours around the clock. I would also hear him on the phone giving other officers, both new and seasoned officers advice on certain issues as if he was their supervisors. He was a believer of officers responding to back up a fellow officer and that was something he would always encourage his coworkers to do. He practiced what he preached, many times he would have to be reminded that he was off duty. He would radio into central dispatch notifying them that he was traveling from his home location even though he was not on the clock.

Reflecting on July 4, 2023, the day started out as a wonderful day where my wife Denise and I were making plans just shortly after Delberth Jr. opened and closed our front door for the last time. Approximately thirty minutes after leaving our home I received that dreaded telephone call. Certainly, there was nothing unusual seeing a registered name on my phone from a fellow officer, however what was said after a positive greeting was met with words that struck like a sledgehammer as the caller mentioned "Cpl. Phipps come quick Junie was shot". July 4, Independence Day, St. John's parade day, or any which way we find to describe this day, it will never be the same for my family and I.

On that dreadful day Delberth Jr. did exactly what he consistently instructed other officers to do in backing up each other. He answered the call to help other officers who were requesting assistance to bring the situation under control. His attempt to render assistance to two of his fellow officers resulted in the loss of his life. Should we be asking ourselves, what would have been the outcome on that day when an individual who was heavily armed, donned with heavy-duty body armor and in position of over two hundred rounds of ammunition had taken up a position against our law enforcement family. Could we then imagine how many more families would have been mourning today. Delberth's action on July 4, 2023, was the ultimate sacrifice to the people of the United States Virgin Island and his fellow officers. He stood by the motto "To Protect and Serve" with his life on that dreadful day.

During Det. Phipps Jr's short career, he has touched so many lives as he carried out his assignments in a professional manner with everyone he encountered. My wife and I are constantly reminded of the respect, kindness and professionalism that our son displayed while performing his duties as a police officer in the community. In recent times I was made aware of a young elementary school student name Bless M. Prosper, who chose to honor Detective. Delberth Phipps Jr. during career day by doing his school Community Project to emulate Detective Delberth I. Phipps Jr. for his assignment. Senators and committee members, my family and I thank you so much for this prestigious Honor for my son Delberth I. Phipps Jr.