

Good morning, Honorable Avery L. Lewis, Chairman on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, Consumer Protection, and distinguished members of this committee. Members of the 36th Legislature, family and friends and those tuned in via radio, LegitTV, or social media. Thank you for holding this hearing today and for inviting me to speak on behalf of Ms. Dilsa Torres Capdeville.

My name is Yvette M. Finch, a proud daughter of the soil who is deeply rooted in this community. Today I have the privilege of appearing before you to testify in support of Bill No. 36-0114, an act honoring my life-long friend, whom I proudly call my sister and kindred spirit, Ms. Dilsa Torres Capdeville. Dilsa is being honored and commended for her outstanding contributions to the Virgin Islands community through her roles in various areas of social services, as well as advocacy for abused women and children, and most recently, her promotion of cancer awareness and prevention. Additionally, it is proposed that the Bolongo Bay Head Start Facility be renamed to the Dilsa Capdeville Head Start Facility in her honor.

I come to you with a deep respect and admiration for Dilsa as a public servant, but more so, to speak on the many years of family relations built between the Torres, Adams, and Finch families. Our families grew up in a small-knit neighborhood of King's Quarter, known to most as "Upstreet". Dilsa lived directly next door to our home, which was the home of our grandparents' home, Bandmaster Alton A. Adams Sr. and Ella Adams. Dilsa's household consisted of her parents, Manuel and Florice Torres, and her four sisters: Dilsa, Angela, Alicia, and Elizabeth. Dilsa and Angela were closer to my older brothers, Larry, LeRoi, Robert (deceased) and Vernon. My brother Cliff and I grew up closer to Alicia and Elizabeth. As a youngster, I cannot remember a day that we weren't in each other's homes. My brother Vernon, Dilsa's dearest friend and confidant, completes the proud family members who support this initiative wholeheartedly. I take this opportunity to enter into the record his words in support of this Bill.

"Dilsa is a woman whose life has been defined by service, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to her community. Growing up in the Upstreet neighborhood surrounded by a very close-knit family, she was deeply rooted in the values of love, togetherness, and giving back. She spent much of her childhood in Upstreet at the home of Alton and Ella Adams, where she could often be found climbing one of the many fruit trees on the property or playing sports in the backyard until her parents called her home.

From an early age, Dilsa showed a natural passion for helping others. She carried that passion into adulthood by founding KidsScope, Inc. Her dedication to community service and outreach made her a trusted and respected figure, as she worked tirelessly to support families, children, and those in need. Dilsa's heart was especially drawn to abused and vulnerable children. Through her involvement in social work from a very young age, she became a source of comfort, guidance, and protection for many. She was often called upon alongside the Virgin Islands Police Department to assist in trauma cases, bringing compassion and care to some of the most difficult moments in people's lives.

Her influence also extended into cultural and spiritual leadership. She is a founding member of the Party Hardies Carolers and was a member of the Jesters Carnival Troupe, using her talents to bring joy, unity, and celebration to the community. Her dedication and impact were further recognized through her induction into the St. John of Jerusalem Knights of Malta, a historic organization known for its mission of service and the establishment of hospitals dating back to the Middle Ages. She was accompanied to this event by Dr. Alfred Heath and Mr. Clive Banfield. Dilsa's legacy is one of compassion, strength, and selfless service, and it is for this reason that I am in support of this long-awaited honor and recognition of my dear friend."

- Vernon A. Finch.

Dilsa embodies the spirit of service. Her work in creating a safe, non-judgmental zone for survivors of domestic violence has provided comfort and hope to so many. She walks with people through their darkest moments and empowers them to rewrite their stories. What is even more rewarding is to see the many people she assisted over the years return to thank her and boast of the lasting, positive impact she has on their lives.

They say the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in serving others, and that perfectly describes Dilsa Capdeville. I am always in awe of her unwavering dedication to her family. Her daughters: Chanelle, Lisa, and Diandra are her pride and joy and her biggest success story. She now boasts of her growing tree; Emmarie, Ziggy, Zoe, and the latest addition, Isabelle (Izzy), who proudly calls her "Amma". She does not speak proudly of her family without including the wonderful sons-in-law, Rodney and Isiah, whom she often boasts of how blessed her daughters are to have such great "family oriented" men in their lives. It really is amazing to see how Dilsa is able to juggle her family dedication and her very demanding profession, a calling that she may never retire from.

"Having witnessed Dilsa's community involvement first-hand, I can confidently say she possesses the rare ability to bring people together for a common cause. In 2016, Dilsa was diagnosed with cancer and spent almost three and a half years at the Cancer Treatment of America in Atlanta Georgia, battling this dreaded disease. Her testimony on her journey is nothing more than miraculous, offering inspiration and hope for many. It was during this experience that she vowed to become an advocate for awareness and prevention by forming a support group. We From Upstreet, Inc. provided the perfect platform to form such a group as well as an opportunity her to re-join the organization. In 2024, she was asked to chair the Health and Wellness Cancer Support Committee, a role she happily accepted. This committee was formed to host monthly support meetings for cancer survivors who needed a place to be amongst other survivors, to share and support each other, and to receive information on valuable medicinal and/or financial resources. Two years later this group continues to thrive, successfully acquiring new members, new resources and reaching its goal of supporting each other through sharing.

Dilsa continues to make a lasting, positive impact on so many lives, including my own, and I cannot think of anyone more deserving of recognition."

Again, on behalf of my family, her children and grandchildren, her many friends, and members of We From Upstreet, Inc., I thank you for the opportunity to testify as well as to Senator Carla Joseph for proposing this Bill. I look forward to your favorable response to Bill No. 36-0114

Yvette M. Finch
