

October 4, 2026

Re: Opening Statement in Support of Bill in Honor of Rashida Hodge

Dear Members of the U.S. Virgin Islands Legislature:

It is my distinct honor and pleasure to provide my strongest support of your consideration of a legislative bill in honor of Rashida A. Hodge. I am currently a Distinguished University Professor and Dean of Engineering Emeritus at NC State University in Raleigh, NC. I have known Rashida for over 20 years and while during my 17-year tenure as Dean of the College of Engineering at NC State I had the pleasure of working closely with many of our very successful and proud alumni, one very special and outstanding alumna who always comes to mind is Rashida Hodge. Rashida's accomplishments as a global and transformative industry leader, as a generous and committed philanthropist, and as a selfless and inspiring mentor are extraordinary and reflect at the highest level the values that define and are cherished by NC State University and our society at large.

Rashida's career includes numerous examples of exceptional leadership and innovative contributions that even at a relatively young age set her apart as a trailblazer in her field and a role model for aspiring leaders. After graduating with B.S. and M.S. degrees in Industrial Engineering from NC State, she embarked on a 20-year career with IBM that saw her rise to the highest echelons of the organization serving as Vice President of IBM Watson AI Strategic Partnerships and Product Management and eventually Vice President of IBM's North America Insurance Industry where she led and oversaw the operations of IBM Global Markets, Sales and Client Relationships in this sector.

In her current position as Microsoft's Corporate Vice President of Azure Data and AI Customer Success, Rashida is recognized as a global and transformational leader of AI based business, processes and platforms at the highest levels of this technology worldwide. Rashida has been on the forefront of ushering in one of the most impactful and transformative technologies in our modern era, artificial intelligence, implementing early adopter solutions in the market. Her career progression has simply been meteoric and has been the subject of numerous articles and national recognitions. These include being named one of Fortune Magazine's 40 Under 40 in technology awardees in 2020, NC Tech Women of the Year in 2021, and receiving the North Carolina Triangle Business Journal's Women in Business Award in 2022.

Originally from the US Virgin Islands, Rashida credits her passion for community, engagement and giving back to her upbringing on the Islands. This passion has motivated Rashida to give back to NC State, the university she often calls "my launching pad into an incredible career" through numerous significant donations and gifts as well as valuable service on departmental, college and university boards. A consistent annual supporter of the College of Engineering, her philanthropic efforts include becoming one of the youngest alumni at NC State to start a scholarship endowment by creating the Real Hope for Next Gen Engineering Scholarship to provide support for women and African American engineering students. Her philanthropy also includes a significant gift to name a main foyer in Fitts-Woolard Hall in honor of her mother, Karen E. Hodge. Her most recent donation was made public in December 2024, when the

Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands announced the \$1 million Rashida A. Hodge Scholarship Fund, noting that this “transformative gift, which will offer a full scholarship at NC State for students from the U.S. Virgin Islands, represents not just an investment in education but a bold commitment to empowering the next generation of leaders from the U.S. Virgin Islands”. It is also clear from the magnitude and nature of this gift that Rashida has truly made it her life’s work to try to ensure that others have access to the resources, opportunities, and mentorship that she had during her time at NC State.

Rashida’s service to NC State has also been significant and includes four years on the Edward P. Fitts Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering Advisory Board and eight years on the NC State College of Engineering Foundation Board, where she was the youngest alumni to ever serve on this board when she joined in 2015. She currently serves on NC State’s Board of Visitors and delivered the University’s 2024 fall commencement address where she shared with the graduates her inspiring life story and ended by expressing that “giving will forever be my positive disruptor of choice”. Suffice it to say that her vision and generosity have already set a powerful example of what it means to give back and inspire others to follow in her footsteps.

Most of all Rashida is simply an outstanding person who cares deeply for the well-being of others and whose excellent communication and interpersonal skills and especially her empathy for others have allowed her to relate to, engage and interact effectively with individuals across a broad and diverse spectrum of interests and backgrounds. This has been a key part of her success and makes her a true “existence proof” for many women and underrepresented minorities as well as an exceptional role model for all who see in her the kind of person they would like to become. What makes her particularly meritorious of a legislative bill in her honor, however, is the great pride that she has in having been born, raised and educated in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The identity and pride of being a “daughter of the U.S. Virgin Islands” is something that Rashida shares with great enthusiasm and passion wherever she goes. It shines a very favorable and powerful light on the U.S. Virgin Islands, which you represent. The culture and values lie at the heart of who Rashida is and her commitment to excellence in all that she does.

I feel very fortunate to have gotten to know Rashida so well both as an alumna and friend and as a colleague on our College of Engineering Foundation Board for so many years. She is a very special person, and I couldn’t be more delighted to reiterate my strongest support of a U.S. Virgin Islands legislative bill in her honor. There should be no doubt that Rashida is highly deserving of this honor, as well as no doubt that this well-deserved honor carries a very special meaning for her. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this statement in support of Rashida. I look forward to hearing of her selection for this honor and will be pleased to provide any additional information you might desire as part of your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louis Martin-Vega". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "M".

Louis Martin-Vega, Ph.D., NAE