

Testimony of Dr. Erick Willie

In Support of Bill No. 36-0320

A Resolution Honoring and Commending Kevré Hendricks for His Outstanding Contributions to Music, Education, Military Service, and Cultural Preservation in the Virgin Islands

Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Avery Lewis, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection; distinguished committee members, non-committee members, and the listening and viewing audience.

My name is **Dr. Erick Willie**, educational leader, music educator, and former student of **Mr. Kevré Hendricks**. I am honored to offer this testimony in strong support of **Bill No. 36-0320**, a resolution honoring and commending Mr. Hendricks for his extraordinary contributions to education, music, military service, and the cultural life of the Virgin Islands.

I had the distinct pleasure of first meeting Mr. Hendricks more than twenty-two years ago while attending **Arthur A. Richards Junior High School**. At that time, he worked tirelessly to ensure that his students were trained to the highest musical standards. As a firm disciplinarian, Mr. Hendricks not only taught us music, but also served as a mentor, role model, and parental figure to many of his students. The lessons he imparted extended far beyond the rehearsal room and prepared us to navigate the challenges of life and adulthood.

Later, while attending **St. Croix Educational Complex High School**, Mr. Hendricks challenged me to learn the tuba. When I first saw the size of the instrument, I immediately accepted the challenge. Little did I know that I would become known for carrying and playing a sousaphone throughout parade routes and community events. It was through the guidance, encouragement, and instruction of Mr. Hendricks that I developed a passion for music that ultimately led me to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education.

During my tenure as an Assistant Principal at **St. Croix Educational Complex**, I had the opportunity to serve as Mr. Hendricks' immediate supervisor. Working alongside him, I witnessed firsthand his professionalism, passion for student success, and unwavering commitment to excellence in music education. Together, we collaborated to re-launch and strengthen the school's band program following a brief hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these efforts, we created

meaningful opportunities for students to develop their musical talents, leadership abilities, and school pride. His vision, dedication, and ability to inspire young people were instrumental in rebuilding a program that continues to positively impact students and the broader community. Through this experience, I gained an even deeper appreciation for his expertise as an educator and musician, as well as his commitment to ensuring that every student has access to high-quality and meaningful musical experiences.

Mr. Hendricks' contributions extend far beyond the classroom. Known affectionately throughout the territory as "Maestro," he has distinguished himself as an accomplished musician, producer, arranger, and cultural ambassador. Through his performances, productions, and leadership, he has played a vital role in preserving and promoting the rich musical traditions of the Virgin Islands while elevating our culture on regional and national stages. Mr. Hendricks is also a true humanitarian. While being honored by the **Crucian Christmas Festival Committee**, he launched a nightly fundraising campaign that generated much-needed support for music programs throughout the district.

Equally commendable is his distinguished service in the **Virgin Islands National Guard**, where he has served for more than twenty-seven years, attained the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3, and served as Commander of the 73rd Army Band. His dedication during hurricanes, public emergencies, and the COVID-19 pandemic reflects a profound commitment to serving others and strengthening our community during times of need.

Perhaps most importantly, Mr. Hendricks has remained deeply committed to giving back to the community that helped shape him. Whether supporting music programs, mentoring students, serving as a role model, or returning to schools such as **Lew Muckle Elementary School** to inspire future generations, he continues to exemplify servant leadership.

For his outstanding achievements in education, music, military service, and community engagement, **Kevré Hendricks** is most deserving of this recognition. Having had the privilege of being both his student and later his supervisor, I can personally attest to his exceptional leadership, dedication, and positive influence on students, colleagues, and the community. His legacy serves as an inspiration to educators, musicians, students, and citizens throughout the Virgin Islands.

I respectfully urge the members of this body to support the adoption of **Bill No. 36-0320** and join in recognizing a son of the Virgin Islands whose contributions have

enriched our schools, strengthened our culture, and positively impacted countless lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Erick Willie

Educational Leader | Music Educator | Former Student | Former Immediate
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