

Good day, esteemed members of the Health, Hospitals, and Human Services Committee.

On behalf of the VI Board of Social Work Licensure, it is an honor and privilege to address you regarding two significant pieces of legislation: Bill 36-0050 and Bill 36-0051. First, Bill 36-0050, proposes revisions to VI Code 27 Chapter 20. The second, Bill 36-0051, concerns the composition of the board. Both bills have been sponsored by Senator Novelle Francis.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the current laws governing social work licensure have remained unchanged since their inception in the 1980s.

Although there was an attempt at revision in the late 1990s, it did not succeed. Since 2008-2009, the board has diligently worked towards updating these laws. With invaluable assistance from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA), Legal Counsel and representatives from the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), we have reached a consensus and are presenting the proposed changes encapsulated in these bills.

Some of you may already be familiar with the Social Work Interstate Compact, having been briefed by ASWB representatives at the National Conference of State Legislature. For those who may not be less familiar, the Social Work

Interstate Compact facilitates licensed social workers' ability to practice across member states without the need for multiple licensures, provided uniform qualifications are met. However, for the Virgin Islands to join this compact, it is essential to first implement the revisions outlined in the proposed bills. To date, 26 states have passed legislation enabling their participation in this compact.

The changes before you aim to modernize regulations in alignment with the evolving field of social work. Historically, social workers were predominantly employed in government agencies. Today, they serve in various settings, including non-profit organizations and private practice. Additionally, the proposed revisions will standardize classification titles with national norms. For instance, the designation of Certified Social Worker (CSW) will transition to Licensed Master's Social Worker (LMSW), and Certified Independent Social Worker (CISW) will now be referred to as Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).

Furthermore, Bill 36-0051 introduces a pivotal development: the addition of a public member to the board. This inclusion underscores the board's commitment to ensuring broader representation and accountability. It is

crucial to emphasize that while adapting to these changes, we must maintain focus on the primary purpose of regulation—safeguarding the public.

In closing, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my fellow board members, both past and present, the staff from DLCA, and of ASWB, for their dedicated efforts in advancing these important legislative initiatives. I also extend sincere thanks to Senator Francis for his invaluable sponsorship of these bills.

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to address this, Body. I remain available to answer any questions you may have.