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The Honorable Carla Joseph
Chair of the Rules and Judiciary Committee
Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie
P.O. Box 1690
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

November 10, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Joseph,

My name is Kia Sears and I am writing to offer my support to Governor Albert Bryan's selection of Melanie Lark Turnbull, Esq. for the position of family court judge. Attorney Turnbull has the intellect, work ethic, and temperament to be an excellent member of the bench.

I have worked alongside Attorney Turnbull for the past seven years in the Office of the Federal Public Defender as an Assistant Federal Defender. During that time, I have had the opportunity to watch, in admiration, her zealous advocacy as she represented some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community and from abroad.

Attorney Turnbull came to the Office of the Federal Defender after having worked as an Assistant Territorial Defender for three years. During her transitional year, she proved that she is a quick learner. Without a formal in-house training program, Attorney Turnbull was easily able to adapt the skills she learned in Superior Court to her practice in Federal Court, digest federal law and incorporate it into her litigation, and navigate the interpersonal dynamics of the practice of law in the District Court of the Virgin Islands.

As a former law clerk to Associate Justice Ive Swan, Attorney Turnbull brought her exceptional researching abilities to her federal practice. She is quick to identify legal issues and thoroughly research the applicable caselaw. She is a master of the rules of evidence and has assisted her colleagues in preparing for oral arguments on various legal topics.

Attorney Turnbull can successfully juggle many responsibilities. Her commitment to her clients has never wavered despite actively raising two young sons. Attorney Turnbull spent countless nights and weekends working to achieve the best outcomes for her clients. This dedication to the work was not limited to her own caseload, as she would tirelessly grind extra hours to help her colleagues with their cases.

Attorney Turnbull is not only a devoted mother and legal scholar, but she is a pillar in the community. She spent several years as a moot court coach for the Virgin Islands Bar Association's high school moot court competition. She has been a guest speaker at numerous community events

including the Who Run the World 2025 Empowerment Conference and the 2024 and 2025 District Court Judicial Conferences. She was recognized as a Woman in the Spotlight for her community involvement at the 2023 International Women's Day Conference.

Attorney Turnbull is also a good person. She has a great working relationship with opposing counsel, courthouse staff, and the federal bench. It is not uncommon to see her talking with the janitorial staff, whom she knows by name, in the District Court. It is evident that Attorney Turnbull is respected by the federal judges as she has been selected to serve on various District Court committees to include the selection committee to fill the magistrate judge position in the St. Thomas division, the selection committee for the Chief Probation Officer of the United States Office of Probation and Pretrial Services and the District Court Local Rules committee.

In closing, Attorney Turnbull's confirmation would be a major gain for the Family Court Division of the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands and an enormous loss for the Office of the Federal Defender. Despite that loss, her confirmation has my full support, and I look forward to seeing her bring the same dedication to justice she offered her clients to the cases over which she will preside.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kia D. Sears". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Kia" on the top line and "D. Sears" on the bottom line.

Kia D. Sears, Esq.