

BILL NO. 36-0194

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

October 27, 2025

A resolution urging the United States Congress and the Office of the United States Trade Representative to expand and modernize the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to further support economic growth and development in the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean region

PROPOSED BY: Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.
Sponsor: Carla J. Joseph
Co-sponsor: Hubert L. Frederick

WHEREAS, the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), originally enacted through the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) in 1983 and expanded by the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) in 2000, was designed to promote economic development and stability in the Caribbean region through preferential duty-free access to the U.S. market;

WHEREAS, the Virgin Islands, as an unincorporated territory of the United States, occupies a unique position as both an integral part of the nation and a vital Caribbean partner, serving as a strategic bridge for hemispheric trade, cultural exchange, and regional diplomacy;

WHEREAS, as a participant in the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the Virgin Islands has benefited from trade preferences that support key industries such as rum production, light manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, and marine-based commerce, thereby stimulating local employment and investment;

WHEREAS, while the Virgin Islands is not classified as a beneficiary country under the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act due to its territorial status, the territory nonetheless

1 shares aligned economic interests with the Caribbean region and remains a strategic
2 stakeholder in regional trade development, policy integration, and sectoral cooperation under
3 the broader CBI framework;

4 **WHEREAS**, the global economy has evolved significantly since the original enactment
5 of the CBI, and modernization is now needed to incorporate emerging priorities such as digital
6 services, renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable manufacturing, and fair
7 labor practices;

8 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands and the broader Caribbean region remain highly
9 vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, hurricanes, and supply
10 chain shocks, and would benefit from expanded CBI provisions that incentivize green
11 infrastructure, carbon-neutral development, and economic resilience;

12 **WHEREAS**, the impending expiration of the CBTPA on September 30, 2030, presents
13 a critical opportunity for the United States to reaffirm and strengthen its long-term economic
14 commitment to the Caribbean region, including the Virgin Islands; and

15 **WHEREAS**, equitable engagement of U.S. territories and Caribbean nations in any
16 modernization of the CBI is essential to ensure the program fosters shared prosperity, regional
17 cohesion, and meaningful opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); Now,
18 Therefore,

19 ***Be it resolved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

20 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands urges the United States Congress to
21 modernize and permanently reauthorize the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Caribbean Basin
22 Trade Partnership Act to reflect 21st-century economic realities, including support for digital
23 services, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, climate adaptation, and small business
24 development.

1 **SECTION 2.** The Legislature further urges that any modernization effort explicitly
2 include the Virgin Islands as a stakeholder and partner, with opportunities for direct
3 participation and benefit under all CBI-related frameworks, policies, and review processes.

4 **SECTION 3.** The Legislature encourages the Office of the United States Trade
5 Representative to consult with the Virgin Islands and relevant Caribbean stakeholders to ensure
6 equitable implementation and policy alignment under the revised CBI framework.

7 **SECTION 4.** The Legislature supports the continuation of trade preference programs
8 that promote environmental sustainability, labor protections, regional cooperation, and long-
9 term economic stability across the Caribbean Basin.

10 **SECTION 5.** The President of the Legislature shall transmit certified copies of this
11 resolution to the President of the United States, the United States Trade Representative, the
12 President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of
13 Representatives, and the Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress.

14 **BILL SUMMARY**

15 This bill urges the United States Congress to modernize and permanently reauthorize the
16 Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), including the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act
17 (CBTPA), to reflect economic realities and priorities such as digital services, renewable energy,
18 advanced manufacturing, climate adaptation, and small business development. The bill also
19 calls for the inclusion of the Virgin Islands as a direct stakeholder in all CBI-related policy
20 discussions and implementation processes.

21 **BR25-0733/September 10, 2025/KEH**