

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

1 **WHEREAS**, the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), originally enacted through the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

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

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

13 **WHEREAS**, while the Virgin Islands is not classified as a beneficiary country under the
14 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.

