

ANTHONY MARDENBOROUGH, JR.

NOMINEE

VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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**#35 CASTLE COAKLEY, P.O. BOX 5166, SI,
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Thursday, February 27, 2025

OFFICIAL TESTIMONY:

**Anthony Mardenborough, Jr., Nominee, VI Board of Career & Technical Education
Committee on Rules and Judiciary**

Good Afternoon, Senator Carla J Joseph, Chairperson of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, Senator Kenneth Gittens, Vice Chairperson, esteemed members of the committee, other Senators present, legislative and central staff, media and to the listening and viewing audience.

My name is Anthony E. Mardenborough, Jr., and I am honored to appear before you today as Governor Albert Bryan Jr. 's nominee for the Virgin Islands Board of Career and Technical Education representing the district of St. Croix. I would like to thank Governor Bryan for entrusting me with this nomination and I express my deepest and utmost gratitude to this committee for considering my nomination before you today.

I'm excited about the profound opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the advancement and progression of career and technical education (CTE) in the Virgin Islands for not only our students, but our educators, business owners and the overall citizenry of this territory. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this month is National Career and Technical Education Month and I would like to thank all of the stakeholders including parents, students, teachers and others who help shape and define what CTE should and aspire to be in today's landscape.

My Background and Career has been built on taking advantage of every opportunity afforded to me, and creating my own with God's grace and guidance as I navigate life in his domain. My career spans several fields to include; Education, Law, Nonprofit Management, and Politics. My background in developing the career journey I have now actually began back in 2012, when I had the drive to start a community program to help my friends improve academically in school at the age of nine.

My organization, The Community Centers for the Arts and Academics of the Virgin Islands stands proud in making positive impacts on the children of St. Croix, as we have hosted six summer camps, two afterschool programs, one Summer Camps Kickball Competition and two Christmas toy giveaways and book drives, fulfilling my passion of making a better Virgin Islands for all of us, especially the youth, our present and future.

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As I moved up in my academic journey, leaving Arthur Richards Junior High School and now entering high school as a Freshman, the 2017 Hurricanes hit and now I'm attending school with a split session for the rest of the school year.

The circumstances that the Virgin Islands were placed in after Hurricane Maria was significant and detrimental, however the opportunity to take advantage was open and I decided to volunteer at Eulalie Rivera Elementary School as a Teacher's Assistant; while completing over 200 Hours in Community Service.

The rest of my secondary education was built on the same principle, taking advantage of every opportunity presented before me. As in the Tenth Grade, I joined Jobs for America's Graduates and became the first person at the school to serve as President for two years, while being involved in Student Council and Change and Negotiate, and starting my CTEC Journey in the National Academy Foundation also known as NAF.

As I enrolled in NAF Hospitality and Tourism program, it first intrigued my interest after participating in a CTEC Fair at the Career and Technical Education Center on St. Croix. The Career cluster represented how I felt about my home and the positive impact I want to make and it was one of the best decisions I've ever made. While being enrolled, I learned basic and advanced skills in Event Planning, Principles of Tourism, Management, Business Law, Finance, Accounting, Leadership, Teamwork and Hard Work. This program also offered me the opportunity to intern at Manning Legal Services, which aligned with my career choice at the time, a lawyer or attorney.

My internship journey in NAF wasn't easy as my senior year was hybrid, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Although this was the obstacle, I successfully completed the program and internship, and graduated from The St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center with a certification in Hospitality and Tourism on May 17, 2021, and two days later with my Diploma from The St. Croix Educational Complex High School.

As I decided to stay home and attend online college, two opportunities presented themselves in months of September and October 2021. With September's opportunity being the profound honor to serve Virgin Islands youth as a Councilman on the Second Legislative Youth Advisory Council not only as a member, but as the Youth Chairperson, becoming the first male to do so. October's opportunity was seeing a job opening for an English and History Teacher position that was posted on Facebook.

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I applied for the job, was interviewed and became a Secondary Education Teacher at St. Joseph Catholic High School from 2021 to 2023, teaching English, History and Social Sciences.

During my second year teaching, I decided to switch Universities of Southern New Hampshire and Arizona Global Campus and enroll into Grand Canyon University to pursue my current course of study, Government with an Emphasis on State and Local Policy.

Then, my second year and journey at St. Joseph came to an end after the 2022-2023 school year and I wanted to work in a new environment.

So, I applied to work at a new school and was hired to teach High School History and Social Sciences at The Free Will Baptist Christian School, where I have been for the past two school years, in addition to pursuing my degree.

These academic and real world experiences have built my caliber as a young Virgin Islander whose desire is to make my home a better place for all of us. In this regard, the nomination before you was an opportunity I took advantage of last October at the Governor's Workforce Summit. I approached the Governor and asked him to consider me for one of the many Boards in the territory that needs members. The Governor told me to email him and the rest is history. When this opportunity presented itself, I immediately began preparing what my vision, mission, ideas and goals for career and technical education would be, especially as I would be the youngest member and most recent graduate on the Board once confirmed.

My mission for Career and Technical Education is creating spaces and opportunities for Virgin Islands Youth to take advantage of and become the workforce of the Virgin Islands, while providing the necessary resources to the educators who are instrumental in passing down the knowledge and training for the future of the territory, not Virginia's future. My vision for the Virgin Islands is to have academically savvy citizens, along with technologically skilled citizens who can fulfill the mandate of keeping the Virgin Islands relevant, present and respected in every conversation and aspect of the Caribbean, United States and the World.

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Once confirmed, my target approach includes the following;

1. **Developing a Taskforce and or Committee with primary stakeholders**, the Virgin Islands Departments of Education and Labor, The Virgin Islands Boards of Education and Career and Technical Education, the University of the Virgin Islands, and The Workforce Development Board to **design a footprint** to ensure Technical students receive the same funding and real- world opportunities in the Virgin Islands.
2. **To work with the Virgin Islands Department of Education and Board of Education** to look at the current Electives and Courses offered at our K-8 and Junior High Schools to evaluate how these courses can be considered **prerequisites** before the students enroll into the programs at the High School level.
3. This also includes advocating for the Board of Education to ensure all public K-8 and junior high schools in the territory **offer at least three to four ongoing CTE-typed courses** to the students before High School.
4. To improve the **Website's accessibility and modernization**. As an independent government entity that requires teachers to visit our platform and the types of clusters that we represent, our website must reflect that core ideology and value. This goal also matches the recently passed legislation, **The IDEA Act** also known as **Act 8857** which was sponsored by Senator Samuel Carrion in the 35th Legislature.
5. To review the current structure of the Board and the schools and how we can institute the **FARES Approach** into the system. The **FARES Approach** stands for **Fair Opportunity, Alignment, Retention, Employment and Sources**.
 - **Fair Opportunity** includes prioritizing the pay of our instructors depending on the course and experience in the career field. For most of the technical careers, a certification, ongoing professional development and years of experience should be required, the degree can be a bonus.

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- **Alignment** includes looking at all current Career and Technical Education courses offered in the territory and adding courses that aligns with the current needs of the community to include Construction as recovery projects need to be completed. This also includes creating our own Government Internship Network, where students can complete internships in the Government relating to their fields of interest.
 - **Retention** includes creating enticing benefits and agreements to assist with keeping instructors within the pool of educators. This also includes offering full ride scholarships to students and or certified citizens in the workforce to obtain the educational requirements and return to work for the Government for five years as a part of the agreement.
 - **Employment** includes designing requirements that match the current pool of certified citizens who make up the private sector workforce, while affording opportunities for students to become apprentices immediately after High School and becoming eligible to teach after Five years of paid apprenticeship or real-world experience. This sector also includes creating a benefit packed campaign in partnership with the Virgin Islands Department of Education to encourage many in the United States to return home.
 - **Sources** include **providing oversight to ensure the proper resources for our students and educators are available** at all schools teaching CTE Courses. This also includes advocating and pushing the Virgin Islands Department of Education **to give funding to the schools to get the necessary equipment** to train our students with 21st century tools.
6. To Work with the Department of Education and the Board of Education at the different institutions, **analyze how we can introduce internships from the 11th Grade for certain courses**, as some courses are required to have at least an actual year of internship, not school year.
 7. To conduct **regular visits of all public schools** that provide Career and Technical Education courses to ensure the proper resources, spaces and equipment are provided to stimulate the best instruction and training for all courses. This also includes safety checks and monitoring of aging infrastructure, to ensure the High priority of safety and wellbeing for our students and educators.

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8. To work internally with the Board to ensure teachers are **regularly being certified** and continue ongoing professional development to garner the best results for the youth and the territory.
9. To work and **maintain a working relationship with The University of the Virgin Islands** to discuss and create pathways for Career and Technical Education in the University, **with certifications and degree offerings.**
10. To maintain a **working relationship with the Governor and his team to ensure oversight over the proposed Technical College** mentioned in his 2025 State of the Territory Address and to ensure this project gets completed on time, without major delays.
11. Lastly, **to make sure the Board of Career and Technical Education is being fiscally responsible** and to **advocate for more funding to carry out our mandates** required by law and to make our CTEC programs the best in the Caribbean and Top Ten in the United States.

In closing, I am deeply honored and humbled to be considered for this position. This nomination sends a message, commitment to advocacy and change and that our youth deserve to have a seat at the table to make positive and ongoing change for the territory. They may not like your voice in advocating for youth to have a seat at the table, but they must respect your passion.

The future of the Virgin Islands depends on a skilled and competitive workforce, and I am eager to contribute my experience and passion to advancing CTE programs that will benefit our students, educators, businesses and the greater community.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.