

Written Testimony for Ardrina Scott Elliott
Nominee to the Virgin Islands Board of Parole

Good morning, Honorable Chairwoman of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands Committee on Rules and Judiciary, Senator Carla J. Joseph, committee members, Vice-Chair and Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, Senator Avery L. Lewis, Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr., Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger, and Senator Clifford A. Joseph, Sr., other senators present, esteemed legislative staff, and those viewing and listening from the chambers, Facebook and YouTube.

My name is Ardrina Scott Elliott. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as a nominee to the Virgin Islands Board of Parole. I am grateful for the confidence placed in me and recognize that this nomination represents more than an opportunity to serve. It carries a responsibility to exercise sound judgment, uphold the law, and remain mindful of the safety and well-being of our community.

My professional career spans more than thirty years in education, administration, and leadership. Each of these experiences has prepared me to serve as a nominee in meaningful ways. As an educator, I learned to meet people where they are, recognize their potential, and understand that growth often requires patience, structure, encouragement, and accountability. As an administrator, I learned to make careful decisions, manage competing responsibilities, follow established procedures, and remain accountable for the consequences of those decisions. As a leader, I learned that trust is earned through consistency, transparency, and the willingness to listen before acting. With these lessons I bring to the Board a thoughtful, disciplined, and compassionate approach to every matter before it.

Throughout my career, I have worked with people from different backgrounds, served in positions of trust, and participated in decisions that required fairness, careful consideration, accountability, and respect for established procedures. These experiences have taught me the importance of listening, examining the facts,

asking thoughtful questions, and recognizing that decisions made in positions of responsibility can have lasting consequences for individuals and the communities they serve. As a nominee, I bring that same care and seriousness to the Board, understanding that each decision affects not only the person seeking parole, but also victims, families, and the broader Virgin Islands community.

My educational background includes degrees in Psychology, Economics, and Business Administration. I am also pursuing a doctorate in Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change at the University of the Virgin Islands. Each area of study contributes something valuable to the work of a parole board. Psychology has deepened my understanding of human behavior, motivation, trauma, and personal development. Economics and Business Administration have strengthened my ability to evaluate information, consider resources and systems, and make practical, responsible decisions. My doctoral studies continue to develop my ability to think creatively, lead through change, and identify constructive solutions to complex challenges. Together, this education will allow me to bring both human understanding and analytical discipline to my service.

I grew up in a military family. My father was a career military man who believed strongly in discipline, structure, respect for authority, and good citizenship. He held our family to those standards. Although I may not have appreciated every lesson at the time, those values became part of the foundation that guides me today. As a nominee, I bring an appreciation for order, responsibility, preparation, and respect for the law. My Christian faith has also strengthened my belief in integrity, compassion, service, and treating others with dignity. These influences have taught me that compassion and accountability can coexist, and that our decisions must be guided by principle rather than convenience. I believe this balance is essential to fair and responsible parole decisions.

Community service has been an important part of my life. Over the years, I have organized fundraising and relationship-building activities to support local schools, churches, and non-profit organizations. I have also served as a member and

president of the University of the Virgin Islands Senate, held various positions in Parent-Teacher-Student Associations, and was a Cub Scout leader for many years. These experiences have taught me how to build relationships, bring people together, listen to different perspectives, and work toward shared goals. They have also shown me that lasting change requires more than good intentions; it requires commitment, collaboration, and follow-through. As a nominee, I bring that community-centered perspective to the Board and remain mindful that successful reentry depends on the strength of the support systems available to individuals and their families.

My experience as a mother has also shaped the way I understand responsibility, growth, and the importance of second chances. Parenting has taught me that people develop at different rates, that guidance must sometimes be firm and sometimes patient, and that accountability is most meaningful when it is connected to the opportunity to learn and improve. It has also taught me to consider the impact of decisions on families and future generations. As a nominee, I bring this human perspective while remaining faithful to the law and the facts in each case.

My years as a mentor have reinforced my belief that encouragement, structure, and positive relationships can help people recognize their worth and make better choices. Mentoring has taught me to listen without judgment, ask questions that promote reflection, and support individuals while still holding them accountable for their actions. This experience will help me evaluate claims of rehabilitation with both compassion and care, looking for meaningful evidence of change rather than relying on assumptions or promises alone.

I understand that service on the Virgin Islands Board of Parole carries a distinct and serious responsibility. The Board must consider whether parole is appropriate under the applicable law, while considering the circumstances of each case and the protection of the public. I recognize that parole is not an automatic entitlement, nor should it be viewed simply as an act of mercy. It is a decision that requires careful consideration of the information presented, the individual's institutional conduct,

demonstrated accountability, rehabilitation efforts, and prospects for successful reintegration, as applicable under the law.

I believe that people can learn from their mistakes, take responsibility for their actions, and make meaningful changes in their lives. My experiences in education, mentoring, parenting, and community service have shown me that change is possible when individuals are willing to accept responsibility and when appropriate support is available. However, I also recognize that personal growth must be considered carefully and supported by relevant information. Rehabilitation does not eliminate accountability, and accountability does not mean that change is impossible. As a nominee, I bring a balanced perspective that recognizes both truths and will apply them carefully to each individual case.

If confirmed, I will approach each matter with an open mind and a willingness to listen carefully to the information presented. My background in administration will help me review records systematically and respect established procedures. My training in psychology will help me consider behavior, motivation, trauma, and personal development without losing sight of accountability. My experience as an educator and mentor will help me recognize meaningful progress while asking whether that progress is supported by consistent conduct and a realistic plan. I will seek to understand the relevant records, the individual's conduct and progress, and any available information concerning rehabilitation and a proposed release plan.

I will also remain mindful of the impact of parole decisions on victims, their families, the individual seeking release, and the wider Virgin Islands community. My experience in community service has taught me that every decision exists within a larger network of relationships and consequences. I understand that no two cases are exactly alike, and that decisions must be based on the applicable legal standards and the evidence available, rather than assumptions or personal impressions.

I will bring an important perspective shaped by my experiences as an educator, administrator, mother, mentor, and community leader. These roles have taught me to see people as whole human beings while still recognizing the importance of responsibility and boundaries. I believe this perspective could help ensure that the Board considers the full range of circumstances that may affect an individual's development, family responsibilities, relationships, safety, trauma, access to services, and ability to reintegrate successfully. I also bring a commitment to ensuring that men, women, victims, families, and other individuals who appear before the Board are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

I hope to contribute practical ideas that strengthen the parole process while remaining within the Board's legal authority. My administrative and leadership experience has taught me the value of clear systems, consistent expectations, and effective communication. These lessons could support efforts to encourage clear and consistent checklists for reviewing parole applications; support standardized release plans that address housing, employment, transportation, treatment, education, and family support; improve coordination with community-based service providers; and promote regular follow-up information regarding individuals released on parole. My experience in education and mentoring also leads me to support appropriate educational opportunities, substance-abuse and mental-health services, life-skills programs, and mentoring partnerships that help individuals prepare for successful reentry. In addition, I believe the Board should continue exploring ways to communicate its procedures clearly to victims, families, applicants, and the public while protecting confidentiality and due process.

I recognize that effective parole decisions depend on reliable information and consistent procedures. My background in administration has taught me that good intentions cannot replace accurate records, preparation, and accountability. If confirmed, I would support efforts to identify gaps in available records, encourage timely access to relevant reports, and promote training for Board members on legal requirements, risk assessment, trauma-informed practices, cultural awareness, and the needs of the Virgin Islands community. My doctoral studies in leadership for

innovation and change have strengthened my belief that institutions can improve when they are willing to examine their practices honestly and make thoughtful, evidence-based changes. These efforts should not predetermine outcomes. Rather, they should help the Board make informed, fair, and legally sound decisions in every case.

I also recognize that public service requires impartiality, confidentiality, and independence of judgment. My professional and community leadership experiences have taught me how important it is to maintain trust, protect sensitive information, and make decisions based on responsibility rather than popularity. If confirmed, I will not allow personal relationships, outside pressure, public opinion, or preconceived beliefs to displace the law and the facts before me. I will respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to the Board, disclose potential conflicts of interest, and conduct myself in a manner that preserves the integrity of the parole process and public confidence in the institution.

I do not come before you believing that I have all the answers. My experience has taught me that effective leadership begins with humility and a willingness to keep learning. I come prepared to listen, learn, ask thoughtful questions, and continue developing the knowledge necessary to fulfill this responsibility. If confirmed, I will familiarize myself with the applicable statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures governing parole, participate in appropriate professional development and training, and work collaboratively with my fellow Board members while exercising my own independent judgment. I understand that the authority entrusted to a Board member must be exercised with care, consistency, and respect for the limits of that authority.

Ultimately, I believe that responsible parole decisions require a thoughtful balance of public safety, accountability, rehabilitation, and the possibility of successful reintegration. The Board's responsibility is not to make decisions based solely on emotion or public pressure, but to evaluate the information before it and act in accordance with the law. My life and professional experiences have taught me that

fairness is not the absence of compassion, and compassion is not the absence of standards. Every decision deserves the seriousness its consequences demand.

If confirmed, I will undertake this responsibility with humility, integrity, compassion, and respect for the law. I will bring the discipline I learned from my family, the understanding developed through education, the patience gained through mentoring and parenting, the practical judgment developed through administration, and the commitment to service strengthened through community leadership. I will remain mindful that behind every case is a human being, that victims and families deserve consideration and respect, and that the people of the Virgin Islands entrust public officials with the responsibility to protect the community and serve the public interest.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and the opportunity to appear before you. I regard this nomination as another opportunity to serve a community that has given me so much. If confirmed, I will be honored to bring my experience, my values, and my commitment to fairness and service to the Virgin Islands Board of Parole. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.