

**TESTIMONY OF PRESIDENT DAVID HALL
UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, YOUTH,
AND CULTURE
29TH LEGISLATURE
OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

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ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**

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Good morning, Chairperson Millin-Young, members of the Committee on Education, Youth, and Culture, other members of the 29th Legislature present, fellow testifiers, members of the media, those in the viewing and listening audiences, ladies and gentlemen. My name is David Hall and I am President of the University of the Virgin Islands. We are pleased for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill No. 29-0162.

At the outset, we believe that the intent of the proposed legislation is laudable. The Board, Administration, and faculty of the University are committed to providing for our students, within the constraints of the funding available to the University, optimal learning experiences both within and outside the traditional classroom. The internship opportunities that an affiliation between The Washington Center and the University of the Virgin Islands would be enormously valuable. They would provide our students with exceptional educational and professional advancement and would broaden the base of experiential learning environments which we presently offer.

This program would be a very strategic investment in the future development of the Territory. The experience that our students would receive by interning in Washington D. C., especially as Congressional interns, would provide them with a sophisticated and informed understanding of how the federal government operates. We are convinced that this experience will only enhance their ability to be effective governmental and non-governmental leaders in the Territory in the future.

Notwithstanding the potential mutual benefits that this proposed legislation has for both the University of the Virgin Islands and our students, there are some minor areas of concern relative to the language of the Bill that we would like to share with you.

Concerns are presented in sequential order, based on the various sections and subsections of Bill No. 29-0162.

1. Section 1 (d) (5) & (7): "... planning and implementing fundraising campaign for funding financial assistance and scholarships ..." "... applying for and accepting advances, loans, grants, contributions, ... for the purpose of this section ..." The concern here is two-fold: first, since there is a governing board, the UVI Board of Trustees, that has fiduciary responsibility regarding the governance of the University, and since the Board tasks the President of the University to address operational matters relative to the University, it is important that the legislation recognizes the Board's authority in regards to all fundraising campaigns and activities which the University is being asked to undertake. Second, the call for the University to undertake the referenced fundraising campaign could be interpreted to mean that there is a very strong likelihood that the proposed legislation will become an unfunded mandate. Given the current fiscal situation

in which the University finds itself, particularly with the reduction in its appropriation dollars from the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI); and the fact that federal funding is restricted in its use, the mandate of the proposed bill is not likely to be possible without continuous funding from the GVI.2.

2. Section 1 (d) (6): "... coordinate the program with ... institutions of higher education in the Virgin Islands ..." Currently, in addition to the University of the Virgin Islands, the Bluewater Bible College (BBC) operates on the western end of St. Thomas (Fortuna). In addition, Barry University, based in Miami, Florida, offers its Physician Assistants Program, a post-baccalaureate program, on the island of St. Croix, with plans to expand to St. Thomas in the near future. To coordinate this program with other institutions would create additional burdens for faculty and staff. We would prefer that the language of this section specifically indicates that the program's primary focus is the University of the Virgin Islands.
3. Section 1 (g) (1) indicates that "The ... Fund is established in the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI)" and that the "... Commissioner of Finance shall provide for the administration of the Fund ..." This provision is inconsistent with how other restricted funds are disbursed and managed by the University. This body has legislated funding for Veterans, Senior Citizens, Valedictorians, and Salutatorians that are disbursed directly to the University and used only for the purpose intended. Further, this takes the timely disbursement of funds out of the control of the University, as noted in Section 1 (g) (3) which states, in part that "All money in the Fund ... must be disbursed upon authorization of the University." This is very different from the current way in which the University handles the funds received from the GVI. Given that Bill No. 29-0162 also references the University fund-raising in support of the proposed internship program, it should further be noted that funds raised by the University are not routed through the Department of Finance.
4. Section 2 of the proposed legislation needs to be reconsidered. The language calls for \$50,000 to be appropriated to UVI for the program. Based on the estimated cost for a student to participate in the program, the proposed amount would only permit four students a year to participate. With five Colleges and Schools at UVI, it would be preferable if we could ensure that at least one student from each College and School could participate. Though we recognize the fiscal constraints of the Territory at this time, we urge you to increase the funding to \$100,000 per year.

Overall, the University views an affiliation with The Washington Center very positively, and we welcome an opportunity for our students to have a broader base for internship opportunities. We applaud the members of this committee, especially Senator Hill for having the foresight to identify this opportunity and provide support for our students. We believe that this investment will provide great dividends to our students and to the future development of the Virgin Islands. We hope that the minor revisions we have raised can be taken into account before the final bill is passed.

In closing, I take this opportunity to again thank you Chairperson Millin-Young and other members of the 29th Legislature for your continued and consistent support of the University of the Virgin Islands. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to share the University's perspective on Bill No. 29-0162 and I look forward to responding to questions that you may have regarding the testimony provided.

Thank you.