

DATE: March 17, 2021

TO: Honorable Senator Carla J. Joseph

FROM: Dr. Elise Warner

SUBJECT: Testimony for Ronaqua Russell

Honorable Senators of the Thirty Fourth Legislature, fellow testifiers and the people of the United States Virgin Islands. A pleasant good morning to all. My name is Dr. Elise Caiby Warner. Wesley Methodist Church, Estate Anna's Retreat here in St. Thomas, is my home church. There, one of the hats I wear is being director of the Wesley Methodist Melody Makers Steel Orchestra. I am not here this morning to make elaborate upon Ronaqua's distinguished career with the United States Coast Guard. That part of her life is well documented. I am positive, however, that some of you may be curious about the early life of this poised, focused, confident, and unassuming young lady who at such a youthful age has already accomplished so much and amassed such a stellar listing of accomplishments with the Coast Guard. Please do not be curious any longer and allow me to share with you that which I know first-hand.

Ronaqua grew up as a faithful member of Wesley Methodist Church. You name it and she has done it. She has served at our church services as liturgist, scripture reader, youth choir member, and has participated in the numerous Harvest, Easter and Christmas programs and celebrations for which our church is known. The youth group to which she devoted most of her time, however, was the church's steel orchestra known as the Melody Makers with Mr. Pete Constantine as its first conductor. She attended practices faithfully and mastered her instrument. Often she had to juggle her time between steel orchestra practice, her schoolwork, and other outside activities. For the eight years she was a member of the group, she performed at all of our annual concerts. When the orchestra produced its first CD PANS N PRAISE, she was the vocalist singing The Lord's Prayer. That same track can also be found on our second CD which was produced in September 2019. She and her fellow panmates, have brought much recognition and accolades to our church. How could we have known at the time that our church was providing Ronaqua with many of the skillsets such as courage, perseverance, confidence and dedication that she has exhibited and utilized in her career.

So, Ronaqua, on behalf of our pastor, the Reverend Helen Mallalieu Maurose, the Wesley Methodist Melody Makers Steel Orchestra Family, its conductor Mr. Carl Hodge, and officers Mrs. Sylvia Forbes, Mr. Sydney Freeman, Ms. Janet Meyers, and Mr. Levi Stapleton Sr, as well as the entire Wesley Methodist Congregation, I congratulate you and your proud parents and family members on this auspicious occasion. We at Wesley are bursting with love and pride as we share in this tribute and public recognition of your accomplishments. May God continue to shower you with his richest blessings. Kudos to the members of this body, the 34th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands for their wisdom in selecting you and celebrating you as an outstanding Virgin Islander. To our God be the glory; great things He has done.