Testimony from Commissioner Justa E. Encarnacion
Virgin Islands Department of Health

Before the

34TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS & HUMAN SERVICES

Chair of Committee
Novelle E. Francis, Jr.

Regarding

34-0040-An Act amending title 27, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new subchapter Va. establishing the Nurse Licensure Compact to create a multi-state nursing license Sponsored by: Senator Kurt A. Vialet
Good day, Honorable Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chair of the Committee on Health, Hospitals and, Human Services, Honorable Senator Marvin A. Blyden Vice-Chair, committee members and all other members of the 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands of the United States and the listening and viewing audience. I am Justa E. Encarnacion, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Health (VIDOH).

I have here with me today, Dr. Nicole Craigwell-Syms, Assistant Commissioner, Hadiyah C. Charles, and Deputy Commissioner of Regulatory Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on BR 21-0344, An Act amending title 27, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new subchapter establishing a Nurse Licensure Compact to create a multi-state nursing license.

The Nurse Licensure Compact aims to increase access to care while maintaining public protection. Under the Nurse Licensure Compact, nurses can practice in other Nurse Licensure Compact states and/or territories, without having to obtain additional licenses.

The general purpose of this Compact is to:

(a) Facilitate the territories responsibility to protect the health and safety of the public;

(b) Ensure and encourage the cooperation of Nurse Licensure Compact states in the areas of nurse licensure and regulation;

(c) Facilitate the exchange of information between Nurse Licensure Compact states in the areas of nurse regulation, investigation, and adverse actions;

(d) Promote compliance with the laws governing the practice of nursing
(e) Decrease redundancies in the consideration and issuance of nurse licenses; and

(f) Provide opportunities for interstate practice by nurses who meet uniform licensure requirements.

The Nurse Licensure Compact will allow registered nurses and licensed practical/vocational nurses to have one multistate license, with the ability to practice in their home territory/state and other Nurse Licensure Compact states. Under the Nurse Licensure Compact, there will be cooperation and sharing of information regarding licensure, regulations, investigations, and adverse action between these states. This is a model act that aims to standardize nurse licensure throughout the nation. It will improve retention and recruitment by offering comity.

The Department of Health is satisfied with the definitions in Article 2 along with the clearly identified proposed structure and operation of Compact. As described in the Bill’s Summary,

- Article 1 defines the purpose of the Compact.
- Article 3 details the general provisions and jurisdiction of the Compact, and
- Article 4 provides additional authorities invested in party state licensing boards
- Article 5 provides for a coordinated licensure information system and for the exchange of information.
- Article 6 establishes the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators.
- Article 7 sets forth rulemaking powers of the Commission.
- Article 8 provides for oversight, dispute resolution, and enforcement of the Compact.
- Article 9 outlines the effective date and provisions for amendment of the Compact, and also requirements for withdrawal from the Compact.
• Article 10 addresses construction and severability

The enactment of the bill will call for modernization of the current board structure that may require the need for increased finances and other resources. In order for this legislation to be fully enacted, the following is necessary: the hiring of additional personnel, IT upgrade, securing of funds for purchasing of equipment with maintenance agreements and re-establishment of operations.

In conclusion, Senator Francis, the Virgin Islands Department of Health supports this measure and remains committed to reducing health risks, increasing access to quality healthcare, and enforcing health standards. We look forward to our continued collaborative efforts with the members of the 34th Legislature. Senators, this concludes our testimony. I welcome the opportunity to respond to questions you may have.