



ST. THOMAS / ST. JOHN
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2023-2024
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HONORABLE KENNETH L. GITTENS
Senator/Chairperson, Committee Of Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety
35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00802

Via Email

RE: TESTIMONY STATEMENT ON BILL #35-0115

Dear *Committee Chair Gittens* and Members, Senators of the 35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, and the listening audience:

My name is John P. Woods, President of the St. Thomas-St. John Chamber of Commerce, I regret missing the hearing today, as this hearing conflicts with our regularly scheduled board meeting of the St. Thomas-St. John Chamber of Commerce. As such, we are unable to provide alternate spokespersons on The Chamber's behalf.

But we have reviewed the draft Bill #35-0115 and are supportive of the efforts to provide the avenues for employment related to individuals that have paid their debt to society. We are, however, concerned that such a Bill places unfair burdens on businesses to validate why a temporary offer of employment may be rescinded due to evidence of a criminal conviction. It sets up a scenario where a business owner may be challenged legally for rescinding an initial job offer. This will result in that business owner incurring legal costs to defend themselves. A prior conviction is not the only consideration that is given to individuals when evaluating their qualifications for employment. Their skills and abilities, outside of any prior conviction, in many cases, are what will be the primary determination of the importance in hiring that individual. We do not believe this needs to be memorialized in a Bill.

Furthermore, employment at most government and private-sector jobs generally includes a period of probation where both parties can part without having to get engaged in laborious evaluations. If this Bill is to move forward, periods of probation should be essential and part of the Bill.

Thank You!
Yours Sincerely,

John P. Woods, AIA, NCARB
President

Cc: Members of the St. Thomas-St. John Chamber of Commerce