

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS AND
FINANCE

03/14/2024-AMENDED AND REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR

02/06/2024-AMENDED AND REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0133

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

September 12, 2023

An Act amending title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 15 by adding section 190gg- establishing a scholarship program to support individuals interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands

PROPOSED BY: Senators: Angel L. Bolques, Jr., Samuel Carrión,
Donna A. Frett Gregory, Dwayne M. DeGraff and Milton E. Potter
Co-Sponsor: Ray Fonseca

1 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:*

2 **SECTION 1.** Title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 15 is amended by adding a section
3 190gg to read:

4 **“§ 190gg. The Virgin Islands Maritime Industry Educational Scholarship**

5 “(a) The Virgin Islands Maritime Industry Educational Scholarship is established and
6 administered by the Virgin Islands Board of Education to provide support to individuals
7 interested in pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands. The scholarship
8 aims to encourage and assist qualified students in obtaining the education and training
9 necessary for a successful career in various maritime-related fields.

10 (b) “Maritime industry” means all industries and sectors directly related to maritime
11 activities, marine shipping, logistics, sciences, or engineering and mechanics; maritime law,

1 economics, technology, tourism and recreation, or safety and security; environmental maritime
2 studies; diving and underwater technology; yachting and recreational boating; fishing and
3 aquaculture; mariculture; port management; naval architecture; and other related disciplines.

4 (c) The Board of Education shall develop guidelines, procedures, and criteria for the
5 application process, scholarship selection, the disbursement and repayment of funds, and shall
6 establish a fair and transparent selection process to select scholarship recipients.

7 (d) To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must have resided in the Virgin Islands
8 for not less than three years preceding the date the application is submitted. An applicant who
9 has been living outside of the Virgin Islands temporarily while pursuing a course of study or
10 while serving in the armed forces of the United States is a resident for purpose of eligibility for
11 the scholarship. The applicant must also be seeking enrollment into accredited colleges,
12 universities, vocational institutions, or other recognized educational programs and pursuing a
13 degree in the occupational areas set forth in subsection (b), which has been approved by the
14 Board of Education.

15 (e) Subject to the availability of funds, the Virgin Islands Board of Education shall
16 award scholarships in an amount not to exceed \$10,000 per year and must be applied to the
17 payment of tuition, lodging, transportation expenses, or any other related expenses in
18 connection with the studies pursued. Scholarships may not be granted for more than four years.
19 The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall disburse scholarship funds when the recipient has
20 been accepted for enrollment at an educational institution and shall thereafter disburse funds at
21 the beginning of each academic year or as directed by the educational institution.

22 (f) (1) A scholarship recipient must execute a contract with the Board of Education
23 agreeing to return to the Virgin Islands not later than 90 days after completion of the course of
24 study. The scholarship recipient shall work in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands for

1 as many years or portion thereof as the person received the scholarship. The obligation to work
2 in the marine industry in the Virgin Islands must be completed not more than seven years after
3 the recipient has completed the course of study.

4 (2) A scholarship recipient who diligently attempts to gain employment in the
5 Virgin Islands maritime industry for a period of not less than two years without success,
6 may petition the Board of Education for a review of their employment obligation and for
7 a release from the contract. The Board shall evaluate each petition on a case-by-case
8 basis and shall consider the scholarship recipient's efforts and the employment market in
9 the maritime industry at the time the petition is filed.

10 (3) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a scholarship recipient who fails to
11 comply with the requirements in paragraph (1) is liable to the Government of the Virgin
12 Islands for the amount awarded under the scholarship.

13 (g) The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall maintain accurate records of the
14 administration of the scholarship, including the number of applicants, the selection process, and
15 the distribution of scholarship funds. The Board shall submit an annual report to the Governor
16 of the Virgin Islands and the Legislature of the Virgin Islands summarizing the Board's
17 administration the scholarship and detailing the scholarship's outcomes and impact.

18 (h) The Virgin Islands Board of Education shall disseminate information about the
19 scholarship to public and private schools, particularly to high school students; to vocational and
20 alternative schools; to the University of the Virgin Islands; and to other educational or
21 community institutions that serve the youth. The scholarship information, application details,
22 and deadlines must be made readily available on the Board of Education's website, and other
23 appropriate platforms.

1 (i) The Legislature of the Virgin Islands shall appropriate funds for the Virgin Islands
2 Maritime Industry Educational Scholarship to the Virgin Islands Board of Education. The
3 Board shall use the funds appropriated for the Virgin Islands Maritime Industry Educational
4 Scholarship solely for the purposes provided for in this section.”

5 **SECTION 2.** (a) The sum of \$100,000 is appropriated in the fiscal year ending
6 September 30, 2024, from the General Fund of the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin
7 Islands to the Virgin Islands Board of Education to fund the Virgin Islands Maritime Industry
8 Educational Scholarship.

9 (b) The funds appropriated in subsection (a) remain available until expended.

10 **BILL SUMMARY**

11 This bill -establishes an educational scholarship to support individuals interested in
12 pursuing a career in the maritime industry in the Virgin Islands.

13 **BR23-0642/August 24, 2023/HLF**

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17 538 - \(REVISED\) DRAFTED ON YELLOW.docx](#)