

BILL NO. 35-0392

Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

October 30, 2024

An Act establishing the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Program to provide scholarships to students pursuing studies in career and technical education in the Virgin Islands, establishing the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Fund; and making an annual appropriation of \$250,000 from the University of the Virgin Islands Scholarship Revolving Fund to the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Fund

PROPOSED BY: Senator Marvin A. Blyden

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 15 is amended in the following instances:

(a) In section 190dd, subsection (j), by adding a paragraph (4) to read:

“(4) Notwithstanding the use restrictions set forth in paragraph (3), the sum of \$250,000 is appropriated annually from the Fund to the Career and Technical Education Scholarship Revolving Fund established in 17 V.I.C. § 190hh(i).”

(b) Add section 190hh to read:

“§190hh. Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Program

(a) There is established the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Program (“Program”) for the purpose of providing scholarships to students pursuing studies in career and technical education in the Virgin Islands.

(b) The State Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (“Office”) in the Virgin Islands Department of Education shall administer the Program.

(c) To be eligible for a scholarship, a student must:

(1) be a United States citizen or permanent resident of the United States;

(2) be domiciled in the Virgin Islands at the time of application to the scholarship program;

(3) have received home instruction in accordance with 17 V.I.C. § 84, or attended a Virgin Islands public, private, or parochial school, or an adult continuing education program, for not less than three years; and

(4) meet all criteria established by the chosen career or technical education school or program for admission.

(d) Students receiving a scholarship shall:

(1) maintain a 2.5 grade point average or its equivalent, as approved by the Office, while in attendance at the chosen career or technical education school or program;

(2) meet all criteria established by the chosen career or technical education school or program for continued attendance; and

(3) sign a contract that requires the student to:

(A) commit to work in the Territory for not less than two years; and

(B) agree that failure to satisfy the work obligation in subparagraph (A) results in the scholarship becoming a loan repayable to the Government of the Virgin Islands at an interest rate established by the Virgin Islands Department of Education, not to exceed the prime rate.

(e) The obligation to work in the Territory must be completed not more than five years after completion of the program or after a certification is received, whichever comes first.

(f) Monies collected pursuant to subsection (d)(3)(B) must be deposited into the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Fund.

(g) The Office, in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, shall develop and implement a job placement program to assist scholarship recipients in obtaining gainful employment in their fields of study or related fields.

(h) The Virgin Islands Department of Education, in collaboration with the Office and the Virgin Islands Board of Career and Technical Education, shall promulgate regulations to implement the Program.

(i) The Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Fund (“Fund”) is established in the Treasury of the Government of the Virgin Islands. The Commissioner of Finance shall administer the Fund as a separate and distinct, non-lapsing fund. The Fund consists of an annual appropriation of \$250,000 from the University of the Virgin Islands Scholarship Revolving Fund established in 17 V.I.C § 190dd(j), all private charitable and federal grants, and any other scholarship donations gifts, devises, bequests, and all other kinds of contributions of real or personal property, from persons, corporations, partnerships, trust funds, charitable or other eleemosynary organizations, domestic, national or foreign, as may be made to the Fund from time to time and any other sums covered into the Fund pursuant to law, as well as any additional contributions as may be appropriated by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. The Commissioner of Education shall disburse monies from the Fund on the recommendation of the Office and the monies must be used exclusively for scholarships awarded under this section and for implementing the job placement program.

(h) For purposes of this section, “career and technical education” means courses at the high school level and programs at the postsecondary sub-baccalaureate level that focus on the skills and knowledge required for specific jobs or fields of work.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Program (“Program”) to provide scholarships to students pursuing studies in career and technical education in the Virgin Islands. The Program will be administered by the State Office

of Career, Technical and Adult Education in the Virgin Islands Department of Education. The bill sets out the eligibility requirements for the Program and requires that students receiving the scholarship must commit to work in the Territory for at least two years. The bill also establishes the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Fund and makes an annual appropriation of \$250,000 from the University of the Virgin Islands Scholarship Revolving Fund to the Virgin Islands Career and Technical Education Scholarship Fund.

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