

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

07/13/2023-AMENDED AND REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR

07/12/2023-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 35-0029

Thirty- Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

February 27, 2023

An Act honoring and commending Donna Marie Christian-Christensen M.D., and bestowing the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor upon her for her tireless contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the medical field and representation in the United States Congress

PROPOSED BY: Senators Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Angel L. Bolques, Jr.,
Franklin D. Johnson, Donna A. Frett-Gregory,
Marvin A. Blyden, Milton E. Potter and Diane T. Capehart
Co-sponsors: Carla J. Joseph, Javan E. James, Sr.,
Samuel Carrión and Ray Fonseca

1 **WHEREAS,** Donna Marie Christian-Christensen is the daughter of the late Judge
2 Almeric Christian and Virginia Sterling Christian and the granddaughter of the late esteemed
3 Virgin Islands educator Elena Christian; and

4 **WHEREAS,** Ms. Christian-Christensen is the mother of two daughters, Rabiah Green
5 George and Karida Green, and the grandmother of Nia Elena Hamilton, Kobe George, Layla
6 Maria George and Nealia Williams; and

7 **WHEREAS,** Ms. Christian-Christensen earned a Bachelor of Science in 1966 at St.
8 Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, and an M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) in 1970 from
9 George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C.; and

10 **WHEREAS,** Ms. Christian-Christensen interned at Pacific Medical Center in San
11 Francisco, California from 1970 to 1971; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Christian-Christensen did her residency in family medicine at Howard
2 University Medical Center from 1973 to 1974 before returning to the United States Virgin
3 Islands; and

4 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Christian-Christensen became a board-certified physician in 1977; and

5 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Christian-Christensen first became politically active in the 1980s as
6 part of the Coalition to Appoint A Native Judge, which emphasized judicial appointments from
7 within the Virgin Islands community and later as part of the Save Fountain Valley Coalition,
8 which called for the protection of St. Croix's north side from overdevelopment; and

9 **WHEREAS**, as a private physician in Family Practice in the U.S. Virgin Islands for 20
10 years, from 1975 to 1996, Dr. Christian-Christensen was aware of the challenges that the
11 underserved population encountered as they tried to access quality health care; and

12 **WHEREAS**, during that time, Dr. Christian-Christensen concurrently served the Virgin
13 Islands Department of Health as an Emergency Room physician, Maternal and Child Health
14 physician, Medical Director of the Ingeborg Nesbitt Clinic, Director of the Frederiksted Health
15 Center, Director of Maternal Child Health and Family Planning, Medical Director of the Juan
16 F. Luis Hospital, and Territorial Assistant Commissioner; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Christian-Christensen continued to delve into politics and advocacy
18 and served as the Democratic National Committeewoman from 1984 to 1994, as Vice-Chair of
19 the Territorial Committee of the Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands, as a Delegate to
20 Democratic National Conventions, and on the Platform Committee of the Democratic National
21 Committee. She also served on the Virgin Islands Board of Education from 1984 to 1986 and
22 on the Virgin Islands Status Commission from 1988 to 1982; and

23 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Christian-Christensen also served as the President of the Virgin Islands
24 Medical Institute, and as a Trustee of the National Medical Association; and

25 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Christian-Christensen was elected to serve as the Territory's Delegate
26 to the United States Congress in 1996; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Christian-Christensen was the first female physician to serve as a
2 member of the U.S. Congress, the first woman to represent an offshore territory, and the first
3 woman delegate from the U.S. Virgin Islands; and

4 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Christian-Christensen served nine consecutive terms, from 1997
5 to 2014, as Delegate to Congress from the United States Virgin Islands; and

6 **WHEREAS**, during her tenure, Delegate Christian-Christensen served on several
7 committee and sub-committees of the U.S. House of Representatives, most notably on the
8 Committee on Energy and Commerce and its Subcommittee on Health; Committee on Natural
9 Resources and its Subcommittee on Insular Affairs and National Parks; Committee on
10 Homeland Security and Committee on Small Business; and

11 **WHEREAS**, soon after her election to Congress, Delegate Christian-Christensen was
12 named the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus' Health Braintrust, which brought
13 together experts in minority health from across the world to discuss, deliberate on and craft
14 policy and legislative initiatives on all levels of government; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Christian-Christensen chaired the CBC Health Braintrust for 15
16 years; and

17 **WHEREAS**, during Delegate Christian-Christensen's tenure, the CBC Health Braintrust
18 addressed a myriad of issues to include: the disparities that confront minorities as they try to
19 access the health care system, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, substance abuse and its effects, the
20 need for more minority physicians and health care professionals, and the need for affordable,
21 accessible health care for all; and

22 **WHEREAS**, it was through this role as Chair of the CBC Health Braintrust that Delegate
23 Christian-Christensen was recognized for her role in not only increasing critical funding for
24 HIV/AIDS and other minority health issues to the U.S. territories and to communities of color
25 around the country, but to the countries across the Caribbean; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Donna Marie Christian-Christensen was critical in gaining an
2 increasing amount of Medicaid funding for the territories, as a means of improving access to
3 healthcare; and

4 **WHEREAS**, because of her service as a physician and as a former member of Congress,
5 Donna Marie Christian-Christensen is known locally, nationally, and internationally as an
6 advocate for minority health; and

7 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Christian-Christensen, as a member of the Subcommittee on
8 Health, was instrumental in obtaining funding for telehealth, information technology and
9 comparative research to reduce healthcare costs in the Territory; and

10 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Christian-Christensen was influential in advocating for minority
11 health in the Affordable Care Act; and

12 **WHEREAS**, Delegate Christian-Christensen received major awards because of her
13 health care advocacy; and

14 **WHEREAS**, in 1999, Delegate Christian-Christensen's alma mater, the George
15 Washington University, honored her as a distinguished alumnus; and

16 **WHEREAS**, in 2001, Delegate Christian-Christensen received an Honorary Doctor of
17 Laws from Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and

18 **WHEREAS**, in 2003, Delegate Christian-Christensen was honored by the National
19 Institutes of Health with the National Library of Medicine's Changing Face of Medicine
20 Award; and

21 **WHEREAS**, that same year, Delegate Christian-Christensen also received an Honorary
22 Doctor of Science degree from St. George's University in Grenada, West Indies; and

23 **WHEREAS**, in 2010, Delegate Christian-Christensen received the Dr. Nathan Davis
24 Outstanding U.S. Representative Award from the American Medical Association; and

1 **WHEREAS**, in 2011, Delegate Christian-Christensen received a Leadership Award
2 from the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Conference in the Bahamas for her role in extending the
3 President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief funds to the Caribbean; and

4 **WHEREAS**, that same year, Delegate Christian-Christensen gave the Inaugural Lecture
5 at the University of the Virgin Islands Caribbean Exploratory Research Center; and

6 **WHEREAS**, throughout her career, Delegate Christian-Christensen combined her love
7 of medicine and health care with her passion and skill in politics; and

8 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Christian-Christensen continues to be an active member of the local
9 and national Democratic Party; and

10 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Christian-Christensen’s public service to her community includes: a
11 member and officer of several community organizations, such as: the Queen Louise Home, the
12 St. Croix Environmental Association, the Women’s Coalition of St. Croix, the St. Croix Central
13 High Parent Teacher Association, the Caribbean Dance Company, the Caribbean Studies
14 Association, the Caribbean Youth Organization and the Faith Moravian Church; and

15 **WHEREAS**, in retirement, Dr. Christian-Christensen has served as a health policy
16 advisor to the Virgin Islands Department of Health providing critical counsel during the
17 coronavirus pandemic; Now Therefore,

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

19 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin
20 Islands, honors and commends Donna Marie Christian-Christensen, M.D., for her service to
21 the Virgin Islands community both in the medical field and in the United States House of
22 Representatives.

23 **SECTION 2.** The Charles Harwood Memorial Complex, once demolished and rebuilt,
24 shall be renamed the “The Donna M. Christian-Christensen M.D. Virgin Islands Department
25 of Health”.

SECTION 3. The Department of Health shall place a sign bearing the inscription “The Donna M. Christian-Christensen M.D. Virgin Islands Department of Health” at the entrance. If the Department of Health relocates to another location, the successor building must carry the name “The Donna M. Christian-Christensen M.D., Virgin Islands Department of Health.”

SECTION 4. Pursuant to title 1 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 7, section 103, the Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, honors Donna M. Christian-Christensen, M.D., by awarding her the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor in recognition of her outstanding public service to the people of the Virgin Islands.”

SECTION 5. The President of the Legislature, or the President’s designee, shall present a perma plaque copy of this Act and the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor to Donna Marie Christian-Christensen M.D., or a designee, at an appropriate ceremony

SECTION 6. (a) The sum of \$5,000.00 is appropriated in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023, from the General Fund of the Government of the Virgin Islands to the Department of Health to erect the appropriate signage.

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

BILL SUMMARY

This bill honors and commends the Honorable Donna Marie Christian-Christensen, M.D. for her unselfish and dedicated service to the people of the Virgin Islands in the Medical Field and as Congressional Representative to the people of the Virgin Islands and renames the Charles Harwood Memorial Complex on the island of St. Croix as the “Donna M. Christian-Christensen Virgin Islands Department of Health” in her honor.

BR23-0150/January 19, 2023/AA

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