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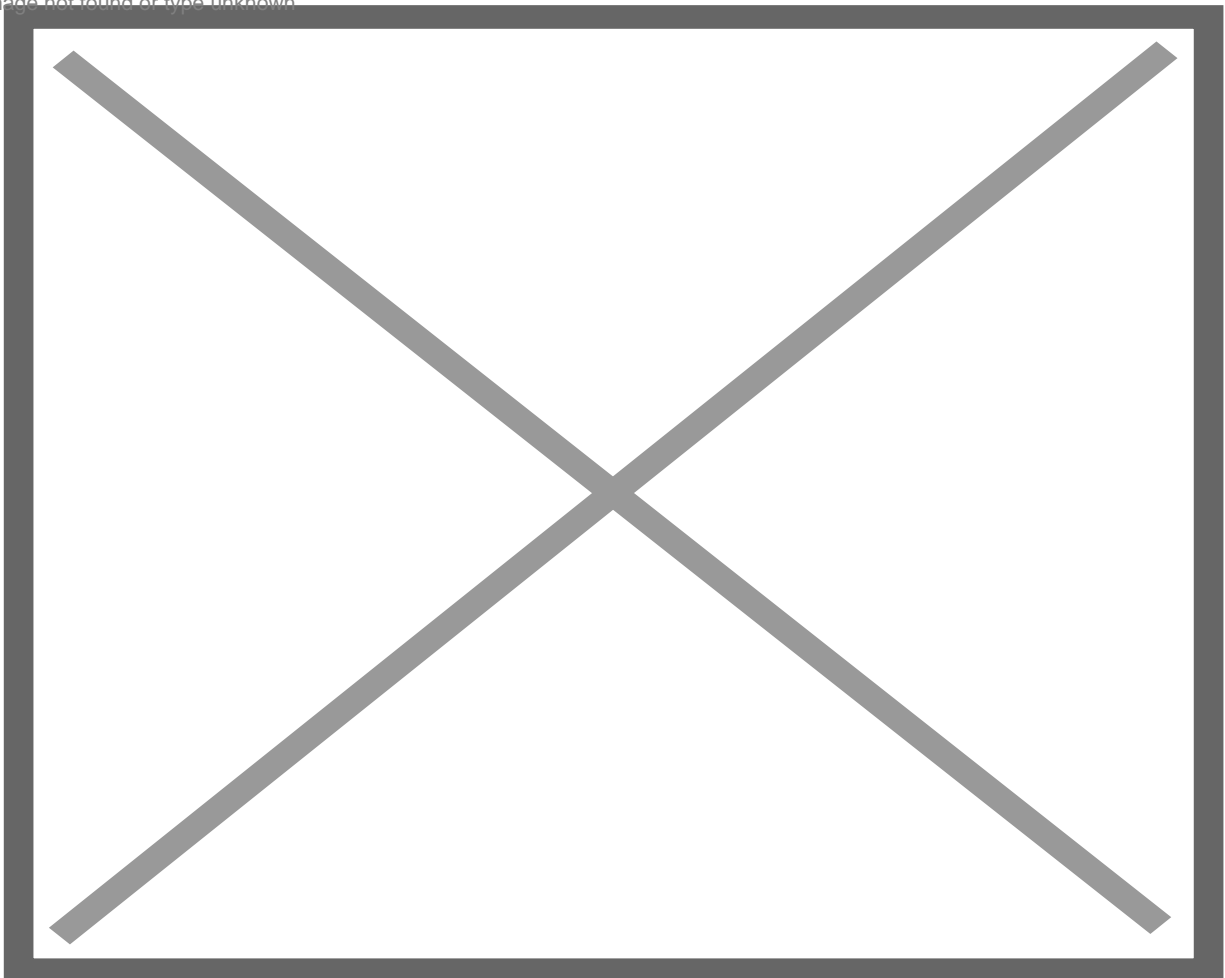
CTE Board Moves to Create Nonprofit Foundation to Fund Trade Students, Classroom Supplies and Competition Travel

The V.I. Board of Career and Technical Education voted unanimously to create a nonprofit foundation after daily pleas from instructors for supplies, student travel funds and resources, with private-sector support eyed as a funding source.

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Faced with a daily influx of funding requests from vocational instructors lacking critical classroom resources, the V.I. Board of Career and Technical Education voted unanimously on Wednesday to establish an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity designed to bypass traditional bureaucratic gridlock and secure alternative financial support for trade students across the territory.

“We get calls on a daily basis about instructors needing funding for supplies, needing funding for resources to be able to do their jobs,” explained board chair Anthony Mardenborough Jr., emphasizing that local trade educators dedicate an extreme amount of personal time and deserve the necessary tools to instruct.

The lack of resources also negatively impacts student achievement, Mr. Mardenborough added. “We have students that are trying to get to the mainland to participate in competitions, to get exposure, to meet fellow students in the same organizations,” he disclosed. “A lot of times the students don't get the opportunity to travel and go to these places to compete because either they don't have the resources that prepares them to compete, or two, they just simply don't have the funding.”

Mr. Mardenborough argued that while the board operates as a public entity, relying entirely on local government budget appropriations is no longer viable within the territory's current economic climate. “I think we need to really explore different avenues, and I believe this is one of them,” he said, referring to the possibility of establishing a non-profit.

Executive Director Genevieve Whitaker explained that the public-private nonprofit model is already being widely utilized by vocational schools across the U.S. mainland. She recalled a legislative fact-finding tour of Massachusetts vocational programs—including Worcester Technical High School and the Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School—where state funding is augmented by independent fundraising foundations. Ms. Whitaker noted that a similar framework already operates successfully in the territory through the Virgin Islands Research and Technology Park, which leverages a parallel nonprofit mechanism to support micro-businesses and local agricultural programs.

A major catalyst for the new CTE-linked foundation stems from direct feedback from the private sector. Ms. Whitaker shared that an executive from a major contracting firm currently involved in disaster recovery projects in the territory recently questioned why local government did not legally mandate that entities receiving millions in contract awards give back directly to local career and technical education infrastructure.

The motion to establish the foundation was formally introduced by CTE Vice Chair Anastasie Jackson, who stated that the non-profit's official purpose will be “generating funds to assist the business of career and technical education in the Virgin Islands.” After the proposal was approved with no opposition, Ms. Whitaker was instructed to immediately begin the administrative legwork to establish the foundation.