

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill Establishing Bachelor's Degree In Nursing At UVI's St. Croix Campus Wins Committee Support

Education / **Published On November 17, 2015 12:38 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **November 17, 2015**



ST. THOMAS -- With a successfully hearing where senators unanimously supported a measure that aims to, for the first time, establish a bachelor's of science in nursing program at the University of the Virgin Islands' St. Croix campus, and falling on the first day of American Education Week, freshman Senator Kurt Vialet, the chief sponsor of bill no. 31-0138, continues to cement his position as a major advocate for education in the territory, according to multiple senators at the Earl B. Legislative Hall here on Monday. Previously, UVI St. Croix only offered an associate degree in nursing.

Funding for the measure would be provided through \$432,000 already secured in UVI's 2015-16 fiscal year budget.

"One would need to have rock in their head not to support this bill," said Sen. O'Reilly, during the Committee on Rules and Judiciary hearing, commending Mr. Vialet for the measure.

"I think it's an important measure and one that secures his position as an individual who believes in improving the education system in our territory, and as a person who has pledged his support for the district of St. Croix."

Sen. Novelle Francis said the bill was "long overdue," joining Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly in her praise for Mr. Vialet. The former police chief and commissioner also acknowledged Senator Marvin Blyden, the measure's co-sponsor.

It's "a move in the right direction," Mr. Francis went on, as it would improve education "and lead to a higher level of quality healthcare." He also said the measure would prevent further disruption of family life for those seeking the degree, as they would not have to travel to St. Thomas, where extra funds for housing and other living expenses would be expended. "I think it's somewhat of a no-brainer," Mr. Francis said.