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Bill to Form Office of Gun Violence Prevention to be Heard June 11

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Police cordoned off a road following a shooting incident at Rainbow Beach in Frederiksted on Sunday, June 23 2019 By. VI CONSORTIUM

Lawmakers are set to consider a proposed measure to establish an Office of Gun Violence Prevention June 11, as the Virgin Islands struggles to keep homicides and other gun-related incidents down since the coronavirus outbreak, according to the Office of Senator Myron Jackson.

“Bill No. 33-0126 is a means to address and combat gun violence and the trauma our communities are forced to endure,” said Mr. Jackson, the legislation’s primary sponsor, said. “The ongoing and relentless acts continue to place a heavy weight on our community and to be a nightmare for the citizens of our territory.”

The bill is scheduled to be heard during the June 11 meeting of the Legislature's Committee on Rules and Judiciary. It aims to create an office that brings together governmental and non-profit agencies with wrap-around service providers to address gun violence through a comprehensive approach that highlights the importance of providing recreational, vocational and economic opportunities for youth.

With wanton gunfire erupting across neighborhoods, Mr. Jackson said now is the time for us to utilize all resources available, locally and nationally, to curb this ill plaguing the territory, as senseless actions can and will negatively impact our fragile economy.

"We cannot continue to function in this deteriorating state. The loss of members in our community is rising to epidemic proportions. We are a community in crisis," he said. "Manpower can no longer be an acceptable excuse for our inability to effectively combat gun violence. It is time that we engage federal authorities and authorities in other jurisdictions. We must restore order and morality to our beloved Virgin Islands."

Mr. Jackson said he will continue to engage his colleagues in the Legislature and the Office of the Governor to find a solution, encouraging them to support the bill. He acknowledged law enforcement for their efforts with limited availability of resources, but cautioned, "We must do more. We urge our community to stay alert and stay safe."