

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Following Ricardo Richards Elementary Dress Code Dispute, Gittens Asks Parties To Work Together In Best Interest Of Students

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ST. CROIX -- Two weeks into the 2016-17 school year and Senator Kenneth Gittens said his phone is still continuously being called to field questions and complaints from parents about uniform dress policies.

In a press release issued Monday, the senator said he was hopeful that parents and school administrators could soon come to an understanding in the best interest of the students.

"As recent as this morning I was asked to meet some parents at one school so that their issues could be heard by a neutral party," Mr. Gittens said on Monday, referring to the Ricardo Richards Elementary School. "Some of the students had been pulled out of class, gathered on the field last week because they were considered out of compliance with the school's uniform code and today pulled into the library. They had issues from skirts that were deemed too short, socks that were not visible, shoes that were not black or white or had the wrong accent color or uniforms with embellishment."

The senator met with school administrators and with Education Department officials, according to the release. He said they reviewed the department-wide uniform dress policy and some of the specifics allowed and prohibited by the school.

"There were some students that were blatantly out of compliance with the dress code and others that fell into the category where we agreed the school's policy was a bit stringent. The main purpose of a uniform – as far as schools are concerned – is so that we can identify the students based on school. We will never have students all look alike as soldiers look in state-issued uniforms, but they should be neat and dressed appropriate for their school and grade level," Mr. Gittens said.

The second-term Democrat applauded the parental involvement from those who have been communicating with school officials and expressing their hardship and willingness to come into compliance. He said outward defiance against school rules and policies is never a good example for growing children as they're taught to follow rules, regulations and policies. He encouraged parents to stay involved and support the schools and the education of their children.