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## Bill to Amend Commission on Aging Act Moves Closer to Becoming Law

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AARP in the Virgin Islands said in a release issued Friday that it has been advocating for revision and reestablishment of the Commission on Aging. On Monday, AARP VI provided testimony in support of Bill No. 33-0367, an act amending Virgin Islands Code to change the composition of the Commission on Aging, during the Senate Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, and Aging hearing.

The bill received unanimous support in the Committee. "AARP thanks the Primary Sponsor and Committee Chair Senator Myron D. Jackson and fellow Committee Members Senators Javan James, Alicia Barnes, Oakland Benta, Dwayne M. DeGraff, Steven D. Payne Sr., and Athneil "Bobby" Thomas. The Bill also received support from Senator Marvin A. Blyden, Non-Committee Member," said the nonprofit in a release.

The bill, which is now on its way to the Rules and Judiciary Committee, amends the existing act to change the composition of the Commission on Aging, its duties and other related purposes. It also re-establishes the Commission on Aging placing emphasis on the government's commitment to help ensure older residents can live their lives with dignity.

The bill further mandates the establishment of an all-inclusive Commission of partners made up of key government offices and community partners along with expert advocates, such as AARP, and is constituted as part of the Office of the Governor. "This Commission will provide guidance in developing a comprehensive plan on aging through the creation of programs and services designed for the aging population of The Virgin Islands. In passing this Bill, the 33rd Legislature will help to fill the gaps in services and programs designed to help Virgin Islanders age in place," AARP VI said.

According to the release, in 2019, AARP supported the vision of Governor Bryan as he enrolled the territory in AARP's Network of Age Friendly States and Communities. Enrollment in AARP's Network included automatic enrollment in the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. "This is a sign of Governor Bryan's commitment to make the Virgin Islands a livable community for people of all ages. The Commission on Aging will work to forward this endeavor addressing the eight domains of a livable community as dictated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and further supported by AARP," said AARP.

"This is a pivotal moment in Virgin Islands' history to make a difference in the lives of people across the Territory. To truly serve our residents, we must meet and exceed their expectation of quality of life," stated Troy de Chabert-Schuster, State Director of AARP in The Virgin Islands.

AARP VI said it is continuing the work to ensure passage of this bill.

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