



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Department of Education Condemns Senator Whitaker's Deliberate Campaign of Misinformation**

ST. THOMAS, USVI – The Virgin Islands Department of Education condemns the ongoing and deliberate campaign of misinformation launched against the Department by Senator Genevieve Whitaker, as it relates to the Department's willingness and availability to testify before and provide information to the Committee on Education and Workforce Development.

As part of its responsibility to regularly communicate with Sen. Whitaker's office, the Department of Education informed Sen. Whitaker through written correspondence on both May 16 and May 23 and during a video-conferencing meeting on May 31 that her hearing planned for Wednesday, June 1 was in direct conflict with employee appreciation activities already paid for and scheduled on the Department's calendar for that date. In both written correspondences, a series of alternate hearing dates were provided for the senator's consideration. Whether due to political grandstanding or something else, Sen. Whitaker chose not to remove the Department from the June 1 meeting agenda, instead opting to publicize the agenda with the Department of Education as a testifier when she knew well in advance that the Department would not be testifying due to employee appreciation activities. Furthermore, a third letter was submitted to Sen. Whitaker's office on May 31 to be read into the record at the June 1 hearing, once again informing of the conflict.

The Department has never not attended a hearing without first providing the Committee chairperson advance notice of a conflict in the date, along with several other dates that might be better suited. In fact, more times than not, the Department's schedule is readjusted to accommodate hearing requests. One of many such examples recently took place on May 2. The Department of Education was the only testifier that showed up for a hearing scheduled for that day, and after waiting on the Senate's video-conferencing platform for more than an hour, was informed of the failed hearing via a social media post, not a courtesy call from Senator Whitaker's office while Department testifiers waited online.

The senator has developed a questionable habit of repeatedly stating that she does not receive information from the Department, when in fact, the information she has been referring to was provided to her since July of 2021. This pattern of misinforming the public continues with every new information request from the senator.

Again, the Department of Education rejects Senator Whitaker's ongoing attempts at misleading the public about the Department's willingness and availability to testify before and provide information to the Committee on Education and Workforce Development. The Department's charge is to provide a quality education for students. One way of doing so is to ensure the well-being of our employees. The enthusiastic attendance of employees at our Employee Appreciation events on June 1 and 3 spoke volumes, with 500 employees attending on St. Croix and over 450 employees attending on St. Thomas.

The Department of Education calls on Senator Genevieve Whitaker to do her part to foster a more open and honest working relationship with the Department so that our combined efforts would provide the intended benefits to the children of the Virgin Islands.

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