



# Legislature Of The Virgin Islands

CAPITOL BUILDING, P.O. 1690 ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS 00804

THE HONORABLE

**Carla J. Joseph**

SENATOR

34TH LEGISLATURE OF  
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Tel.(340)693-3515

Fax.(340) 693-3633

[senatorcarlajoseph@legvi.org](mailto:senatorcarlajoseph@legvi.org)

[senatorcarlajoseph.com](http://senatorcarlajoseph.com)

**CHAIR**

Committee on Government Operations &  
Consumer Protection

**MEMBER**

Committee on Rules & Judiciary

Committee on Education & Workforce Development

Committee on Disaster Recovery & Infrastructure

Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks & Recreation

**Press Release**

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**Contact: Senator Carla Joseph Office**

**(340) 693-3515**

**[senatorcarlajoseph@legvi.org](mailto:senatorcarlajoseph@legvi.org)**

## **SENATOR JOSEPH CO-SPONSORS BILLS ADDRESSING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN THE TERRITORY**

Senator Carla Joseph issued the following statement on Bill No. 34-0031 relating to the penalties for child neglect and Bill No. 34-0032 to require a person who abuses a child to seek counseling. The Committee on Rules and Judiciary approved both measures and now move forward to the Committee on the Whole.

"I am pleased to join with my colleague Senator Javan James in co-sponsoring two significant bills to address the penalties related to perpetrators of child abuse and neglect that we see too often in our Territory.

"Bill No. 34-0031, relating to the penalties for child neglect to require the convicted person to attend counseling in addition to imprisonment or fine, and Bill No. 34-0032, to require a person who abuses a child to seek counseling, are essential measures. If adopted, the measures will aid in rehabilitating offenders and, most importantly, protecting the children of our community.

"Having worked in the trenches with 16 – 24 year-old young people in need of a second chance, I know the importance of counseling to provide guidance and support if it is not available within the home. Abuse and neglect are an awful reality that has impacted generations sometimes within the same families.

"I commend and applaud the efforts of the Family Resource Center and the Women' Coalition of St. Croix, who provided testimony virtually as well as Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez for her written testimony in support of Bill No. 34-0031 and Bill No. 34-0032 during Thursday's Committee on Rules and Judiciary. These nonprofit organizations and government entities see the impact of abuse and neglect. But most importantly, these agencies provide valuable services free of charge to those in need of counseling within our community.

"I encourage members of our community, if you see, know, or are aware of any apparent abuse or neglect of children, to say something. The sooner you say something, the sooner you can save the life and health of a child. Any information reported to the Women's Coalition and the Family Resource Center is confidential and investigated to protect children who may not have a voice in these disturbing situations.

"The fact is that child abuse and neglect are serious public health problems that can have long-term impacts on the health and wellbeing of our young people. It is my hope that these two measures will prevent any abuse or neglect of young Virgin Islanders by addressing the matter at its source."

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