

Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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The Honorable
Angel Bolques, Jr.
Senator-At-Large
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, & Parks

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Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture

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Committee on Rules & Judiciary
Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety
Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunication
Subcommittee on Energy & Infrastructure Development



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Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques Jr. Addresses Key Findings in Recent KIDS COUNT Reports and Calls for Collaborative Action

U.S. Virgin Islands – Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques Jr. has issued a statement on the 2023 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Books Report findings. First and foremost, the Senator-At-Large thanks the St. Croix Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and all other stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to this and past reports.

Senator-At-Large Bolques specifically notes Detailed Changes Noted Between the 2022 and 2023 KIDS COUNT Reports:

Child Poverty: The child poverty rate, particularly in St. Croix, has seen a troubling increase. Specifically, the rate for children under five in St. Croix has escalated from 36% in 2022 to a concerning 42% in 2023. This spike is concerning as it indicates that our young parent population desperately needs help.

Educational Challenges: A stark decline in educational assessment scores has been observed. For instance, 3rd-grade math proficiency decreased by 10 percentage points from the pre-pandemic level, with 76% of students scoring at the lowest level. The reports indicate a sharp decline in educational assessment scores, with notable regressions in both English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

Economic Well-being: On a positive note, the USVI saw a substantial increase in employment, rising from 33,260 individuals employed in 2021 to 41,437 in 2022. This marks a significant stride towards economic recovery and curtailing poverty issues.

Senator-At-Large Angel Bolques Jr. stated: "The KIDS COUNT reports provide us with crucial insights into the evolving landscape of the well-being of our children in our territory. While we are making some progress in economic areas, the increased rates of child poverty, the decline in educational outcomes, and child violence are deeply concerning. As a territory, we must address these challenges head-on and with a sense of urgency. Our children are the future of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and it is our responsibility to ensure that this future is bright and promising."

"It is time for all public sector stakeholders to come together to discuss these findings, understand the underlying root causes, and develop strategic actions to mitigate these issues. Our focus should be not only on immediate relief but also on long-term solutions that address the systemic issues affecting our children. I am calling for a collaborative effort among all public sector stakeholders to create a comprehensive action plan that will reverse these concerning trends and their trajectory and promote the well-being of every child in our territory. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of our children and, by extension, the future of the U.S. Virgin Islands. "

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