

ACT NO. 8737

BILL NO. 35-0101

THIRTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2023

An Act honoring and commending Dr. Olaf "Bronco" Hendricks for his tireless years of remarkable and invaluable contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the field of psychiatry, his advocacy for social justice for individuals with behavioral health and substance use issues, and for his music; and mandating that any mental health facility established on the islands of St. Croix be named in his honor

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WHEREAS, Dr. Olaf "Bronco" Hendricks was born on St. Croix, Virgin Islands on September 28, 1944, to Olaf B. Carlisle Hendricks and Bianca Sobotker Hendricks; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hendricks grew up in Free Gut and attended kindergarten through 12th grade at St. Mary's School in Christiansted, during a time when Free Gut was known as "Upstreet" because the streets are literally located uphill from the main sections of town; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hendricks enjoyed a nurturing, close-knit community and a childhood filled with romps in the street, swims in the reservoir, storytelling, and stilt-walkers. Although many of the families have moved from the old neighborhood, this community was so close and so special that their bonds have remained. Dr. Hendricks and his neighbors formed the group the "Hillsiders" that met annually; and

WHEREAS, when he was between one and two years old, Dr. Hendricks contracted polio and was transferred to Puerto Rico where he was placed in an iron lung for approximately 9 months. While recovering in Puerto Rico, he was exposed to the Spanish language and the only way of communication; and

WHEREAS, during his high school years, Dr. Hendricks learned to play the saxophone and owned several horses. He loved music and horseracing, but at a very young age he decided to become a physician after he had an encounter with four-term Virgin Islands Senator Randall "Doc" James, M.D., and Urika Moorehead, RN in public health; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hendricks graduated from Howard University in Washington D.C. with a bachelor's degree in zoology in 1967, and a medical degree with a specialty in Psychiatry in 1972, the same year Howard University conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on former Governor of the Virgin Islands, the late Melvin Herbert Evans; and

WHEREAS, immediately after completing his residency in 1974, Dr. Hendricks returned to the Virgin Islands and provided psychiatric services for the Division of Mental Health, the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital, the Richmond Penitentiary, Anna's Hope Detention Facility, now the Golden Grove Correctional Facility, and the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital. He also provided psychiatric services to almost all the public and private schools on St. Croix and to many churches; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hendricks served as Medical Director and Territorial Psychiatrist at the Bureau of Corrections beginning in 1974, and the Director of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services for several years. He served as the only psychiatrist at the St. Croix Hospital, now the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center, from 1983 to 1996. He served as Chief Medical Officer from 2007 to 2009, and remained a staff psychiatrist at the hospital until 2011; and

WHEREAS, throughout his career, Dr. Hendricks also worked on a rotational basis at the St. Elizabeth Psychiatric hospital in Southeast, Washington, D.C., operated by the District of Columbia Department of Behavioral Health, where he trained and volunteered for about six years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hendricks was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Health and served from 1991 thru 1993. In 1996, he was appointed interim Commissioner of Health by Governor Roy L. Schneider.

WHEREAS, from 2007 to 2013, Dr. Hendricks was the psychiatrist at The Village Rehabilitation Center on St. Croix, providing clinical services to persons with behavioral disorders and persons with substance use issues and worked with the MISAH project (Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord), providing homeless people with immediate access to long-term, sustainable accommodations; and

WHEREAS, apart from his medical practice, Dr. Hendricks is a co-founder of the Crucian Cultural Institute, the Hillsiders Association, and the Crucian-Rican All-Ah-We Organization. He was an original member of the board of governors of the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute, where he served for more than eight years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hendricks played saxophone with the Quelbe band, Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights, for more than forty years. He also spent time hosting the radio program on WSTX, AM970 "Common Cause", where he discussed the beliefs, attitudes and values of Virgin Islanders and other Caribbean people; and

WHEREAS, from 1961 to 2021, Dr. Hendricks bred and raised racehorses and somewhere in that timeframe, between horseracing, practicing medicine, and playing music, he found the time to marry his beautiful wife Mryl (Todmann), and together they raised four children: Kemba (Deceased 1992), Kai, Kareena (Moses), and Rabiah (Foss); and

WHEREAS, throughout this amazing life, in which he has enjoyed much success and has graciously given so much time and energy back to his community, Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks had always insisted: “The responsibility for what happens on our islands lies with us and only us!”; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, honors and commends Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks for his tireless years of remarkable and invaluable contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands in the field of psychiatry, in his advocacy for social justice and change for individuals with behavioral health and substance use issues, and in his music.

SECTION 2. In recognition and acknowledgement of Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks’ service to the Virgin Islands community as a psychiatrist, especially to the residents on the island of St. Croix, the Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the Virgin Islands mandates that any mental health facility established on the island of St. Croix must be named in honor of Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks;

SECTION 3. In recognition and appreciation of his contributions to the people of the Virgin Islands, the President of the Legislature or the President’s designee shall have a permanent plaque copy of this Act prepared and presented to the family, or the family’s designee, of Dr. Olaf “Bronco” Hendricks, at an appropriate ceremony.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on July 20, 2023.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 24th Day of July, A.D., 2023




Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
President


Carla J. Joseph
Secretary



Bill No. 35-0101 is hereby approved.

**Witness my hand and the Seal of the Government of
the United States Virgin Islands at Christiansted,
St. Croix, This 1st day of August, 2023 A.D.**


**Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor**