

Legislature of the Virgin Islands



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The Honorable

Angel Bolques, Jr.

Senator-At-Large

36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

CHAIRMAN

Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports & Parks

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture

MEMBER

Committee of the Whole

Committee on Rules & Judiciary

Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety

Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure & Planning

Sub-Committee on Energy & Infrastructure Development



For Immediate Release-

November 21, 2025

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Senator Angel L. Bolques Jr. Commends 2025 KIDS COUNT USVI Report Urges Bold Action for Territory's Children

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Senator Angel L. Bolques Jr. today applauded the release of the **2025 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book**, titled *"When Data Speaks: The Voices of Our Children,"* commending the St. Croix Foundation for Community Development and its partners for their continued leadership in data-driven advocacy for the well-being of the territory's youth.

The annual report, now in its fifth edition under the stewardship of the St. Croix Foundation, offers a comprehensive view of the conditions shaping the lives of children across the U.S. Virgin Islands. It presents key metrics across six domains: **Education, Economic Well-being, Family and Community, Health, Opportunity Youth, and Community Bright Spots**, amplified by reflections directly from the youth themselves.

"This year's report is both a wake-up call and a guidepost," said Senator Bolques. "The numbers reveal stark challenges, but it is the voices of our children—clear, courageous, and insightful—that offer the deepest truths. Their lived experiences must drive our policies."

Key findings from the 2025 Data Book include:

- A **50% decline** in the child population since 2000—threatening the future workforce and economic resilience.
- A **33% child poverty rate**, nearly double the national average, with rates exceeding 42% for children under five on St. Croix.
- **Chronic absenteeism** affecting one in four public school students, placing long-term educational outcomes at risk.
- A growing **wage gap** and household income disparity across districts, with St. Croix families in public housing earning significantly less than their counterparts.

Senator Bolques also underscored the impact of the newly expanded **KIDS COUNT USVI Data Dashboard**, a free, interactive tool that offers public access to vital statistics for use in policymaking, program development, and grant writing.

“Thanks to the tireless work of the KIDS COUNT USVI team and Principal Investigator Dr. Saul Santiago, we now have more than a report—we have a real-time data platform to inform bold, strategic action,” Bolques said. “I also want to recognize the nonprofit leaders, government agencies, and—most importantly—our youth, whose voices breathe life into this data.”

As Chair of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, and Parks, and Vice-Chair of the Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture, Senator Bolques pledged to continue advancing policy that:

- Raises wages and expands pathways to economic mobility
- Modernizes educational infrastructure and addresses chronic absenteeism
- Increases mental health and early intervention resources
- Supports youth workforce development and Opportunity Youth engagement

“The resilience of our young people is inspiring, but it should never be mistaken for sufficiency,” Bolques added. “Let us meet their strength with our commitment.

For access to the full 2025 KIDS COUNT USVI Data Book and Data Dashboard, visit: <https://www.stxfoundation.org/kids-count-dashboard>

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