

TESTIMONY BY
SHARON ANN MCCOLLUM, PH.D.
COMMISSIONER
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HISTORIC
PRESERVATION, YOUTH & RECREATION
Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall
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Good morning Honorable Chair, Senator Myron Jackson, members of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth & Recreation, other members of the 31st Legislature present, the listening and viewing audiences. I am Peter Seipel, Territorial Director of Athletics. Present with me today is Anthony D. Thomas, Chief of Staff for the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) and Ms. Shaulia K. Todman, Athletics Director Assistant. We are here on behalf of Sharon Ann McCollum Ph.D., Commissioner of the Department of Education, to provide testimony concerning updates on our sports programs in schools, including a status report on interscholastic volleyball and football, and the challenges faced.

Before we get into the specifics, Commissioner McCollum wants to thank this legislative body and Chair Myron Jackson for bringing the much needed attention and exposure to interscholastic sports in the Territory. Presently, in our public schools we engage in the following interscholastic sports in the St Thomas/St John and St. Croix District including Volleyball, Cross Country, Baseball, Girls & Boys Basketball, Tackle football, Flag football, Softball, Coed Soccer, Track & Field, and Cheerleading. This past weekend, October 21-23 2016, Central High School hosted their 22nd annual Varsity Invitational Volleyball tournament and Charlotte Amalie High School and Ivanna Eudora Kean High School traveled to St Croix to participate in the tournament. We would like to congratulate Educational Complex Barracuda Boys Team and Antilles Hurricanes Girls Team on their hard fought victory and kudos to all of the Territory's High Schools that participated. Their participation made the tournament extremely competitive.

On the Elementary school level, VIDE, in collaboration with the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation, is currently involved in Volleyball, Cross Country, Baseball and Girls Basketball.

We believe our greatest challenge at this time is working to develop a vigorous program that provides the youths of the Virgin Islands with the athletic opportunities on the national and international stage. We have started the process of evaluating our current Athletics structure and programs to determine our funding and equipment needs. A plethora of studies provide validation that a school to prison pipeline exists and is exacerbated if no extracurricular activities exist. Athletic Programs are positively impacting this phenomenon and VIDE is working diligently to provide positive opportunities for the community's youth.

Additionally, we have begun our Track and Field Capital project at the Educational Complex High School and excited to announce that we should commence track projects for Charlotte Amalie and the third phase of Ivanna Eudora Kean High School Track. As you are aware, before school commenced, in August most Senators were able to tour our facilities and witness the new gym floor at the Bertha B. Boschulte Junior High School, which was donated by the University of the Virgin Islands.

SUMMARY

Despite our challenges we remain steadfast in moving the Department forward and will to continue to remain focused on improving student outcomes. We are fully committed to our vision, mission and three state priorities, and will continue to work to ensure our students are college and career ready, while improving the organizational climate for students and staff. With the assistance of the administration and this legislative body, by emphasizing the need for improvements in academic achievement, teacher/leader effectiveness and organizational culture, we trust that the future remains positive for the Department and its cherished stakeholders, particularly our students.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. We are available to respond to any questions you or the members of the Committee may have about VIDE's Sports Programs. Thank you.