

1 **Testimony on Impact of the Taxi Industry on Tourism in the Virgin Islands:**

2 Good Morning Honorable Senator Justin Harrigan, members of the 31<sup>st</sup>  
3 Legislature, members of the Committee on Government Services  
4 Consumer and Veterans Affairs, ladies and gentlemen in the Chambers  
5 and the listening audience. My name is Joyce D. Griffin, Assistant  
6 Commissioner for the Department of Tourism.

7 As the Department of Tourism's Representative on the VI Taxi  
8 Commission, I am pleased to offer my testimony today on the impact of  
9 the taxi Industry from the prospective of the Department of Tourism  
10 addressing the specific points requested by this committee: whether  
11 **visitors provide feedback on services rendered, are visitors surveyed,**  
12 **recommendations for improvements and concerns.**

13 As the first and last point of contact with the destination service industry,  
14 the experience provided by any taxi driver can set the pace for a visitor's  
15 **overall satisfaction with the destination as well as the intent to return**  
16 **creating a lasting impact on the Industry that feeds the Virgin Islands.**

17 **Visitor feedback:** visitors provide general service feedback on the  
18 departure survey when departing at the airports. The DOT initiated survey  
19 includes all service related touchpoints. Data collected on the exit survey  
20 provides teaching points for the quarterly Customer Service Training.

21 We would like to commend the 115 drivers that have invested the time to  
22 attend the first round of training in 2016. The next round of Customer  
23 Service Training will be held May 26 & 27<sup>th</sup>.

24 The Taxi Commission receives any additional feedback letters and emails  
25 passed on by hotel partners, The Hotel Association's, Travel Agents and  
26 other industry partners brought to the DOT's attention.

27 To my knowledge, DOT is the only agency that collects feedback.

1 **Improvements:** The Department would like to see increased attendance  
2 at the Customer Service training, making it mandatory, as well as added  
3 payment options.

4 As we all know, licensed taxi operators are independent business owners  
5 and technically work for themselves. However, the performance and  
6 customer service skill level of these operators limited or extensive, can  
7 range anywhere from overwhelmingly positive to a vacation disaster.

8 Based on industry feedback, most taxi drivers provide a positive  
9 experience and the Department of Tourism commends those drivers who  
10 go **“above and beyond”** daily to deliver memorable service. However,  
11 there is a small percentage of drivers that have not quite gotten it, making  
12 the overall image of taxi drivers as “poor and unfriendly”. An encounter  
13 with one from that small sub-group can cost the territory visitor vacations  
14 dollars. Therefore, DOT is in support of mandatory training certifications  
15 tied to registration and renewal. This would provide **opportunity** for the  
16 minority to improve.

17 The Department of Tourism is extremely excited about the “TEXT a TAXI”  
18 initiative that will roll out this summer. A program that will allow  
19 passengers to **text the tag number** for drivers that deliver exceptional  
20 service. The Department will intern, reward those drivers with the most  
21 submissions.

22 The average traveler today takes the time to research and plan the  
23 anticipated ancillary spend in any vacation destination prior to traveling.  
24 As a U.S. destination with multiple activities and attractions, our taxi  
25 drivers should offer the option to pay electronically. It will certainly  
26 increase visitor spend for the drivers and the overall destination.

27 Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on behalf  
28 of the Department of Tourism.