



**TESTIMONY**  
**Committee on Budget, Appropriations and**  
**Finance**

**Presented by:**  
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Good morning, Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, members of the Committee and the listening and viewing audience. I am Eugene E. Jones Jr, Executive Director at the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA).

I hereby submit this testimony to be read into the record regarding Bill No. 36-0257, an Act proposing the transfer of the eastern portion of Parcel No. 2C Estate Ross, No. 8 New Quarters, St. Thomas, from VIHFA to the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) to expand the campus of the Charlotte Amalie High School.

The Authority wishes to state clearly that it does not support this bill as presently proposed. VIHFA's position is grounded in both process and substance.

First, with respect to process, VIDE currently holds an active lease agreement with the Authority for use of a portion of this property and has already remitted its first installment payment in the amount of \$25,000.00. This payment reflects not only an executed agreement between the parties, but also a clear reliance on the continued availability of the site under the agreed-upon terms. The remaining lease balance of \$25,000.00 is due on January 1, 2027, further evidence of an ongoing financial obligation tied to the continued use of the property.

In addition, VIDE has since requested an amendment to Agreement T40-529, to increase the size of the leased premises by adding up to 52,272 U.S. Sq. ft. for the continued use as a laydown yard to support critical construction and infrastructure activities. The Authority favorably considered this amendment and provided a draft lease agreement for their review and execution.

At no point during these negotiations or under the existing lease arrangement was the Authority informed, formally or informally, of any intent, need, or strategic plan by VIDE to expand the physical footprint of the Charlotte Amalie High School onto this parcel.

The introduction of this legislation, absent any prior notice or coordination with VIHFA, is disingenuous and represents a significant departure from established interagency collaboration practices. It also raises serious concerns regarding transparency, good faith negotiations, and the integrity of ongoing governmental engagements.

Second, the parcel in question is not surplus land. It is a strategically positioned asset within VIHFA's portfolio that the Authority intends to utilize. Notably, VIHFA has been engaged in active discussions with the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) regarding the potential use of this property as the permanent site for critical law enforcement infrastructure. These discussions are ongoing and reflect a pressing territorial need to strengthen public safety capacity through the establishment of a properly sited and purpose-built facility.

The proposed transfer, therefore, would not only disrupt existing agreements and active negotiations, including those involving financial consideration already received and future payments due, but would also create potential legal and financial implications associated with an active lease and prospective lease arrangements. Additionally, it would foreclose a viable opportunity to address long-standing public safety priorities.

In closing, VIHFA respectfully urges the Committee to consider the broader implications of this bill, including its impact on existing contractual obligations, interagency trust, ongoing negotiations, and the optimal use of limited public land assets.

At present, no formal request or justification has been presented to the Authority to substantiate the necessity of this transfer for continued operation of the Charlotte Amalie High School campus. In the absence of that and given the competing and actively negotiated public uses of the property, the Authority cannot support the proposed legislation.

Thank you.