

**THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET,
APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE**

Chairman: The Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Jr.

Virgin Islands Police Department

St. Thomas, USVI

December 15, 2025

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in this matter. I am Sean A. Santos Sr.; Assistant Commissioner of Police of the Virgin Islands Police Department present on behalf of Police Commissioner Mario M. Brooks.

We stand before you today in full support of the proposed bill amending Title 23 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 10, to establish civil penalties for disregarding marine advisories and to create the Territorial Marine Safety Fund.

The U.S. Virgin Islands is blessed with stunning marine environments that are part of our natural heritage and vital for our economy. However, with this beauty comes the responsibility to ensure the safety of those who venture into the waters. As we know, marine advisories are issued based on critical assessments by agencies such as the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Weather Service, and our own

Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, to name a few. These advisories are not mere suggestions; they are essential warnings that protect individuals and our community as a whole.

By imposing civil penalties for neglecting these advisories, we create a powerful deterrent against reckless behavior on our waters. The proposed penalty of \$500 for acts that result in emergency response mobilization sends a clear message: safety is paramount. Those who choose to ignore these warnings place not only themselves at risk but also put our emergency responders in harm's way, resources that are desperately needed for genuine emergencies.

Moreover, the establishment of the Territorial Marine Safety Fund is a significant step forward.

The fund will ensure that the financial resources collected from penalties are reinvested into our communities, particularly for improving our emergency response capabilities, purchasing necessary equipment, and maintaining our vessels.

This bill also addresses the collaboration between various agencies, including the Virgin Islands Police Department, our emergency management, and rescue organizations. The inclusion of nonprofit entities like St. Croix Rescue, St. John Rescue, and St. Thomas Rescue in benefit from the fund is commendable and emphasizes the importance of teamwork in safeguarding our marine environment

and our people.

In conclusion, I believe this bill embodies our commitment to public safety and the preservation of our precious marine resources. It empowers us to act decisively and responsibly while collaborating with all involved entities. I urge you to support this important legislation for the betterment of our community and the safety of our waters.