



December 14, 2025

Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on Budget, Appropriation & Finance
Capitol Building
St. Thomas, VI 00802

RE: Testimony on Bill No. 36-0210

Dear Senator Francis:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the proposed legislation appropriating funding for the repair, replacement, and operation of streetlights throughout the Territory. I respectfully apologize for my absence from today's hearing. I am attending a Virgin Islands Port Authority Governing Board meeting that includes action items requiring my participation.

The Virgin Islands Department of Public Works supports the overall intent of this legislation. A safe, functional, and reliable streetlighting system is essential to public safety, traffic operations, and overall community well-being, and the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority requires adequate and dedicated resources to properly maintain that system.

DPW is actively installing streetlights across the Territory as part of our roadway improvement projects. These efforts respond to documented safety needs, community input, and long-standing gaps in roadway illumination. It is important to emphasize, however, that WAPA has the statutory responsibility for the maintenance and operation of streetlights. That responsibility includes power supply, routine maintenance, repairs, and replacement of failed components. Without sufficient funding to support these obligations, newly installed streetlights cannot deliver their intended long-term benefit.

From that perspective, this appropriation is both timely and necessary.

The Department would respectfully offer one consideration for the Committee's review. The need for functional streetlighting is equally urgent in both districts, and from DPW's operational experience, challenges related to outages, aging infrastructure, and public safety concerns exist Territory-wide. As such, I believe an equal allocation of funding between the districts is needed.

It is important to also note that I cannot speak to the status of the Virgin Islands Insurance Guaranty Fund itself. My comments are limited to the operational importance of ensuring that, once appropriated, adequate resources are available to support WAPA's streetlighting maintenance responsibilities.

Finally, DPW stands ready to support the requirement that WAPA submit a streetlighting plan within 45 days of enactment. That plan will be critical for accountability, and coordination, as well as to ensure alignment between installation efforts and long-term maintenance planning.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your continued attention to public safety and infrastructure needs across the Territory.

Respectfully submitted,



Derek Gabriel
Commissioner
Department of Public Works