

TESTIMONY FOR THE 36TH LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE
ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS, AND FINANCE

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2025

DARYL GRIFFITH

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CHIEF

FINANCIAL OFFICER

VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

1 Good day, Honorable Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chairman, and other Committee
2 members of the 36th Legislature's Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance,
3 and members of the viewing and listening audience. I am Daryl Griffith, the Interim
4 Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer of the Virgin Islands Waste
5 Management Authority.

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7 The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) supports **Bill No. 36-**
8 **0039**, that proposes to increase the cost for individuals, firms, corporations and
9 associations to bring containers or flat rack containers to the Virgin Islands and
10 depositing 50% of the funds into the Anti-Litter and Beautification Fund of which
11 twenty-five percent must be used for garbage collection, solid waste trash removal and
12 territory wide beautification and twenty five percent to fund a territorial Anti-Litter
13 Beautification Summer Program within the Virgin Islands Waste Management
14 Authority.

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16 The VIWMA annual budget has been underfunded for its entire existence. This has
17 led the Authority to accumulate an Accounts Payable of over \$20 million, which
18 translates to hundreds of local vendors being owed thousands of dollars. Over the three
19 years I have been with the Authority, serving as CFO and currently Interim Executive
20 Director, the staff and I have worked to reduce the annual budget shortfall. In 2023,
21 the annual budget shortfall was \$15 million, and now it is \$5 million. If the proposed
22 legislation is enacted, along with the garbage collection fees that VIWMA is presenting
23 to the PSC in 2026, the Authority will have a budget that is better than break-even. It
24 will be able to start repaying the \$20 plus million owed to vendors. This will enable
25 the Authority to fully implement plans to thoroughly clean up the Virgin Islands, with
26 the assistance of its citizens.

In St. Croix, in the next 12-24 months, the island will have no bin sites and only convenience centers. An example of a Convenience Center is the location in Peter's Rest, and the bin sites are in Mon Bijou, Concordia, and Cotton Valley. These bin sites will be replaced with new, modern trash collection convenience center facilities that will be clean.

In St. Thomas, the Authority plans to increase house-to-house garbage collection using smaller garbage trucks. This initiative will be implemented gradually, starting with one community at a time. Once it is fully enacted, the bin sites serving these communities will be removed. St. Thomas is too beautiful to have garbage bins at every corner, and the residents deserve house-to-house garbage collection. I am delighted to hear that 25% of these funds will be allocated to fund a territorial Anti-Litter Beautification Summer Program for kids.

In 1993 and 1994, I participated in the Anti-Litter Beautification Summer Program, which fostered my love for the environment and a commitment to keeping the community clean. I remember visiting numerous sites, such as Elena Christian and local roads and beaches, to help clean up the community. I love this program, and it would be an honor to restart it with the staff of the Authority. I would like to take this time to thank both the Solid Waste and Wastewater teams at the Waste Management Authority. We have seen significant improvements in garbage collection and wastewater management. To all the hard-working men and women of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority, thank you for your hard work.

This concludes my testimony. The Authority appreciates the Senate's efforts to provide VIWMA with the necessary financial resources to serve the community adequately. I

53 stand ready to answer any questions that you may have.

54 Thank you.