

Good morning, Honorable Members of the Virgin Islands Legislature.

My name is Carolyn Galloway, and I am grateful for the opportunity to stand before you today and share my personal experience with the Virgin Islands Diabetes Center of Excellence.

I am not here today as an expert. I am here as someone whose life was changed by a number on a piece of paper.

When I went to my doctor for my annual checkup and received my A1C results, something happened inside of me. I realized that I could no longer ignore my health or tell myself that I would make changes tomorrow.

That moment became a wake-up call for me.

I thought about my parents. I watched them take pills and insulin because of diabetes, and I remember thinking, “I don’t want that to be my story.” I knew I had an opportunity to make changes before I got to that point, and I knew I had to take that opportunity seriously.

So I made a decision.

I decided that I was going to take charge of my health.

Joining the diabetes prevention class gave me the knowledge, support, encouragement, and accountability I needed. I learned that changing your life doesn’t mean you have to change everything overnight. Sometimes it starts with one healthier meal, one walk, one better choice, and one decision to keep going.

The class taught me how important it is to understand what I am eating, watch my portions, become more physically active, and set realistic goals. But it taught me something even more important:

I learned that I have a say in my own health.

There were days when making changes wasn’t easy. But having a class where people understood what I was going through made a difference. I didn’t feel alone. I had people encouraging me, teaching me, and reminding me that my health was worth fighting for.

This program didn’t just give me information. It gave me hope.

Hope that I can change my future.

Hope that I don't have to follow the same path that I watched my parents experience.

Hope that by making changes today, I can give myself more healthy years with my family and the people I love.

And that is why I am standing here today.

I want other people in the Virgin Islands to have the same opportunity I had.

There are people in our community who may be sitting in a doctor's office right now hearing that their A1C is elevated. Some may be frightened. Some may not know what to do next. Some may think that diabetes is simply something they have to accept.

I am here to say that education can make a difference.

Prevention programs can make a difference.

Having someone teach you, encourage you, hold you accountable, and help you believe that change is possible can make a difference.

I believe we have to reach people before they become seriously ill—before they need more medications, before complications develop, and before families have to watch someone they love struggle with this disease.

The Diabetes Center of Excellence gave me tools to make better choices for my life. And I believe those tools should be available to as many people in our Virgin Islands community as possible.

So today, I ask you to remember that behind every statistic is a person.

Behind every diagnosis is a family.

Behind every A1C number is someone's mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, sister, brother, or child.

I was one of those people.

And because I had access to education and support, I decided that my number was going to be my wake-up call—not my destiny.

I am still on my journey. I am still learning. I am still making changes. But today, I feel empowered to take responsibility for my health.

I am standing here today because I believe my story can help someone else.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share it.

And thank you for supporting programs that give people in the Virgin Islands the knowledge, support, and hope they need to live healthier lives.

My health is worth fighting for. My future is worth fighting for. And our community is worth fighting for.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless the Virgin Islands.