

Testimony of
Vincent Richards

Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement
On behalf of

Lisa M. Alejandro
Commissioner of the Department of Property & Procurement

On

Transfer of Property by and between the Government of the Virgin Islands, acting through its
Department of Property and Procurement, and the Virgin Islands Port Authority.

Before

Committee of the Whole

Tuesday, November 18th, 2025

Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall
ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Good Morning, Committee Chair/Senate President, Milton E. Potter, Vice-Chair Kenneth L. Gittens, and members of the 36th Legislature, Central and Legislative Staff, fellow testifiers, visitors present in the chambers, and members of the viewing and listening audience.

I am Vincent Richards, Assistant Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Property and Procurement (DPP). I appear today on behalf of Commissioner Lisa M. Alejandro to offer testimony on Bill No. 36-0138.

Chairman and Members of the 36th Legislature, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the Department of Property and Procurement (DPP) to express support for Bill No. 36-0138 (Bill).

This legislation authorizes the transfer of designated Government-owned parcels in Subbase, including filled and submerged lands, to the Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA) for the Crown Bay District Redevelopment Project. DPP has reviewed the proposed conveyances and confirms that they are appropriate, legally permissible, and in the best interest of the Virgin Islands.

The Crown Bay District Redevelopment Project represents a significant public investment opportunity. It is designed to transform a long-deteriorated industrial area into a modern cruise destination, expand berthing capacity, strengthen the Territory's competitiveness in the tourism sector, and catalyze substantial private-sector development. The anticipated economic benefits — enhanced commercial activity, increased employment, and improved public infrastructure — justify the consolidation of these properties under VIPA, the entity charged with managing and operating the Territory's maritime facilities.

The Bill also places responsibility for environmental remediation, abatement, and demolition on VIPA, relieving the Government of substantial costs associated with preparing these properties for productive use. Additionally, the Legislation ensures that DPP and other Government agencies will retain a defined and dedicated parking area within the redevelopment footprint, thereby preserving essential operational capacity.

Financially, the requirement that VIPA remit Seven Million Dollars and Zero Cents (\$7,000,000.00) to the Government of the Virgin Islands upon transfer provides immediate benefit to the St. Thomas Capital Improvement Fund. The waiver of certain submerged lands fees for fifty years is limited in scope and justified by the scale of the investment and the long-term economic return expected from the project.

The Bill further authorizes necessary roadway improvements and mandates annual reporting to the Legislature, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continued legislative oversight.

In summary, Bill No. 36-0138 advances a major public-benefit project, ensures optimal use of Government property, and provides both immediate and long-term economic advantages to the Territory. For these reasons, the Department of Property and Procurement respectfully supports its adoption.

Thank you for your consideration. I am available to answer any questions.