



Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DHS Support Paragraph

The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (VIDHS) supports the Health Information Exchange (HIE) and the Health Data Utility (HDU) not-for-profit structure for governance . DHS supports this approach because (1) a secure, interoperable exchange improves care coordination and continuity—especially for Medicaid beneficiaries—by giving authorized providers timely access to key clinical information and reducing duplicative tests and avoidable readmissions; and (2) an HDU public-private, multi-stakeholder governance model creates transparent, accountable rules for permitted use, privacy, and sustainability so health data is shared fairly and securely across the USVI healthcare ecosystem. This unique approach also ensures that no singular entity has the ability to skew data input or output for any one agency or facility. Establishing the HDU also safeguards the Territory’s HIE as essential, shared infrastructure—so it remains stable, trusted, and mission-driven beyond any single administration or funding cycle. For DHS and Medicaid operations, it strengthens real-time coordination across hospitals, FQHCs, clinics, and other partners, improving transitions of care and outcomes for the residents we serve. It also supports a more resilient system—protecting continuity of care during emergencies, improving public health reporting, and reducing dependence on paper records.



**GOVERNMENT OF
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES**

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

February 4, 2026

To the esteemed members of the 36th legislature,

I am Dr. Esther Ellis, Territorial Epidemiologist for the USVI Department of Health. The United States Virgin Islands Department of Health (VIDOH), Epidemiology Division, would like to hereby write in support of the Bill to enact the Health Data Utility safeguarding and providing a safe and permanent home for our HIE technology. Health Information Exchange (HIE) is crucial to epidemiology because it transforms fragmented clinical data into actionable, aggregated and real-time information allowing for faster and more accurate disease surveillance, outbreak investigation and community health assessment. By connecting health IT systems, HIE enables public health officials to track health trends across entire communities rather than relying on limited, manual reporting from single institutions. HIE is essential to epidemiology for the following reasons:

- 1- Improved disease surveillance and reporting
- 2- Real-Time data for outbreak management
- 3- Enhanced syndromic surveillance
- 4- Better data accuracy and completeness
- 5- Efficient public health investigations
- 6- Disaster and emergency response
- 7- Improved population health management.

I am in full support of this bill "Establishing the Virgin Islands Health Data Utility".

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Esther Ellis".

Esther M. Ellis, PhD
Territorial Epidemiologist
Virgin Islands Department of Health

Statement of Support

AARP VI strongly supports the proposed Health Data Utility legislation as a critical investment in strengthening care coordination, supporting family caregivers, and improving health outcomes for Virgin Islanders. Throughout the Virgin Islands, approximately 1 in 4 adults, provides unpaid care to a family member, friend, or neighbor.¹ Caregivers frequently help loved ones navigate care across multiple providers, islands, and off-island systems, making timely, secure, and access to health information necessary. Consistent with AARP policy, we support interoperable electronic health records and information exchange systems that improve quality, efficiency, and patient- and caregiver-centered care, while avoiding unnecessary administrative or technological burdens on families. A well-implemented Health Information Exchange can ease the caregiving journey by improving care coordination and supporting caregivers in managing medications, appointments, and transitions of care, ultimately improving the health and overall well-being of their loved ones.

Reasons for Support

- Supports family caregivers by improving access to timely, accurate health information and reducing care navigation challenges.
- Improves health outcomes by strengthening care coordination, reducing duplication, and supporting safer, more effective care.

Footnote / Data Reference

¹ AARP Public Policy Institute caregiving prevalence estimates applied to U.S. Virgin Islands adult population data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that approximately one in four adults—about 16,000 residents—provide unpaid family caregiving.