The Honorable
Milton E. Potter
Senate President of the 36th Legislature
of the Virgin Islands
St. Thomas, USVI

August 24, 2026

Good morning, Senate President Milton E. Potter, President of the 36th Legislature, and the leadership of the 36th Legislature and all members of the 36th Legislature.

My name is Garrett Shaboo Ritter President of USVI Equestrian Equine Therapy Project Inc., it give me great pleasure to address the 36th Legislature discussion on a very important lease agreement between the Virgin Islands government and SGVI for the rebuilding of Randall "Doc" James Racetrack my testimony is based on my horse industry knowledge, industry education and industry experience which allow me to present my argument of this very important matter before the 36th Legislature.

The committee's discussion focuses on rebuilding Randall "Doc" James Racetrack with investment partner SGVI, without acknowledging the horse industry as a labor-intensive industry.

Governor Bryan Jr. and the 36th Legislature must acknowledge the industry as labor-intensive; the horse industry is an economic engine, and without a comprehensive investment package, it will fail to expand the Virgin Islands economy, including economic spinoff to the historic Town of Frederiksted and Christiansted.

The history of horse racing in the Virgin Islands is nothing more than a cultural sporting event with no economic impact on the Virgin Islands economy. This lease agreement will extend nothing more than the same old stuck-on-stupid horse racing habits while continuing to do the same foolish things we have done for 75 years, repeating the same mistake and failing to acknowledge the industry as a labor-intensive industry.

The lease agreement puts horse owners at an economic disadvantage, without horse racing reform legislation. Horsemen have invested hundreds of manpower-free labor hours and millions of dollars over decades of racing thoroughbred horses in the Virgin Islands, and this lease agreement undermines our racing history and our ability to reap financial rewards without horse racing reform legislation.

After years of financial hardship keeping the “Sport of Kings” alive, this lease agreement strips horsemen and the Virgin Islands government of major financial benefits without passing horse racing reform legislation. If the Virgin Islands government does not acknowledge the horse racing industry as a labor-intensive industry.

The horse industry's labor hours are between 500,000 and 700,000 annually, across small and large racetracks.

However, in the Virgin Islands, the labor workforce is free labor working around horses, with no weekly salary, payroll taxes, fringe benefits, or retirement investment. Elected officials acknowledge the Virgin Islands horse racing industry as a culture stuck on stupid. Lawmakers of the 36th Legislature need to acknowledge the horse industry as a labor-intensive industry and pass common-sense racing reform legislation.

SGVI is a gaming company with little or no racetrack management experience and without a current racetrack industry business model for building a sustainable racetrack operation in the Virgin Islands.

Horse owners’ income characteristics are mostly individuals employed by the Virgin Islands government at the lowest pay scale, with household incomes of less than $65,000, compounded by the high cost of living and the high cost of feeding and training horses in the Virgin Islands.

Rebuilding the racetrack will increase racehorse imports to the Virgin Islands, and with limited resources and no infrastructure to support them, it will lead to more horses being neglected and abused without horse racing reform. The horse industry is vast and complex, with a wide range of economic inputs and outputs. The horse industry's diverse nature has created misunderstandings among elected officials and the people of the Virgin Islands about its economic contribution.

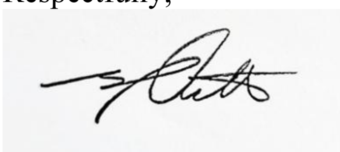
The horse industry has four components and five sectors: **Sport, Recreation, Entertainment, Agriculture, and Business.** Agriculture is a key part of the horse racing industry, and a comprehensive agriculture plan, with local farmers producing quality grass hay, will help reduce costs for horse owners.

Regardless of size or location, great racetracks share similar dynamics, including the fundamental aspects that make them successful. The circumstances in which the systems of regulation and culture may be vastly different, but the principles should be of great interest to lawmakers, investors, and racing organizations in the Virgin Islands.

It’s easy to forget that, when it comes to economic activity, one of the Virgin Islands' greatest virtues is a culture of tolerance. When tolerance is the norm, everyone flourishes because it breeds trust, and trust is the foundation of innovation and entrepreneurship. Increasing trust in any group, organization, or society leads to good outcomes. The good news is that culture not only matters, but it can also change. Culture is not wired into our human DNA; it is a product of context, geography, education level, and leadership.

Without horse racing reform legislation, this lease agreement will have no meaningful economic impact on the Virgin Islands economy, including the poor economic conditions in the town of Frederiksted, which should be part of a broad, comprehensive economic development plan that includes rebuilding the Randall "Doc" James Racetrack. The Virgin Islands is the only, Black-controlled government to ever pass legislation expanding gaming to racetracks to create a sustainable horse racing industry.

Respectfully,



USVI Equestrian Equine Therapy Project Inc.