

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
PORT AUTHORITY
TESTIMONY - BILL NO 35-0396

Carlton Dowe, VIPA Executive Director

**35th Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands
Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture**

**The Honorable Senator Javan E. James Sr.
Chairman**



NOVEMBER 13, 2024

VIRGIN ISLANDS PORT AUTHORITY TESTIMONY

Good morning, Honorable Senator Javan James Sr., Chairperson of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, all senators present, legislative staff, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Carlton Dowe, the Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA). Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony for Bill Number 35-0396, that will require the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism to re-establish weekly Harbor Night events in Frederiksted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. VIPA supports this Bill that will provide a family-friendly and culturally infused event for the residents and visitors in St. Croix while enhancing the territory's tourism industry.

Harbor Night was hosted in the historic town of Frederiksted at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility, locally referred to as "The Frederiksted Pier." VIPA is willing to assist the Department of Tourism with the return of a popular event to Frederiksted. However, if any resources or manpower is required, we would need to know what those costs are and be paid to implement the additional services being requested.

Visitors and residents alike would enjoy the experience of Harbor Night. It highlights the best St. Croix has to offer. Traditional foods, drinks and treats, music, dance, and other forms of entertainment are exciting ways to highlight the unique cultural heritage of the island and energize the night life on St. Croix. It will also provide economic opportunities for vendors and ground transportation services, and many other businesses that participate in the event, such as security services and the companies that will provide the equipment to host the event at the Pier. The return of Harbor Night could also be an attraction to market to our cruise partners and

encourage their ships to stay longer in St. Croix, allowing the cruise passengers to participate in the event.

We do have two concerns about the Bill as presented. First, VIPA cannot allow pop-up casino operations at its cruise facility in Frederiksted due to liability issues. Also, the Bill speaks about the installation of lines for shore power and potable water. VIPA's long-term goal is to provide shore power and water at its cruise ship piers. Keeping in mind that the water must meet the EPA standards. However, we cannot guarantee that these amenities will be in place by December 2025.

VIPA remains committed to working with all government and private entities to improve the territory's tourism product and keep the USVI competitive in this global industry. Tourism is a powerful economic driver that provides jobs for thousands of Virgin Islanders, stimulates investments, encourages cultural exchange, and generates revenue. It is the bread and butter of our economy, and it behooves us all to do the things that will make the USVI a destination to remember. Chairman James, this concludes my testimony. I am prepared to answer any questions you may have regarding the information I have presented.