



November 12, 2024

VIA EMAIL TO: amshila@legvi.org

Honorable Senator Javan E. James
Chairperson – Economic Development & Agriculture
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
3022 Estate Golden Rock
Christiansted, VI 00820

Dear Senator James,

Herein, please find the Department of Tourism's testimony for the 35th Legislature's Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture that has scheduled for hearing at **10:00 am, Wednesday, November 13, 2024, in the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Chambers on St. Thomas.**

The committee is requesting testimony on **BR35-0396** - An Act requiring the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism to reestablish weekly Harbor Night events in Frederiksted, St. Croix *Sponsored by Senator Diane T. Capehart*. This testimony will allow the Department of Tourism to provide insight to this body.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Boschulte
Commissioner, U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism

Good morning, Honorable Senator Javan E. James Sr., Chairman of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, Senators, Legislative staff, colleagues, and the present, viewing and listening audiences. I am Shamari Haynes, appearing today on behalf of Commissioner Joseph Boschulte and the USVI Department of Tourism.

Thank you for extending an invitation to testify on Bill No. 35-0396, an Act requiring the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism to reestablish weekly Harbor Night events in Frederiksted, St. Croix, as sponsored by Senator Diane T. Capehart.

After a thorough review of Bill No. 35-0396, the Department of Tourism stands in support of the proposed concept which would benefit the St. Croix tourism portfolio. Increased activity in Frederiksted will offer the community and visitors alike a chance to experience this historical charm and culture of the big island. In conjunction with the Government's executive projects to strengthen and repair St Croix's infrastructure, we continue to explore ways to increase commerce throughout the territory.

Currently, the proposed legislation outlines a weekly event, however based on our extensive industry knowledge, we suggest beginning with a monthly event. Within a monthly structure, local businesses and vendors will have an opportunity to increase revenue, gain exposure and reach visiting clientele without the immense pressures of weekly deliverables while also allowing the Department of Tourism adequate time to plan, execute, and promote the events. When time permits, or in the event that cruise partners increase late boarding on St. Croix, we could consider implementing smaller scaled weekly events as an added incentive.

As it pertains to the requirement of having pop-up casinos as part of Harbor Night, while we welcome the idea, we are not the subject matter experts; therefore, we request that the body considers amending Bill No. 35-0396, Section 1, which obligates the DOT to have pop-up casinos by removing or reassigning this matter to the Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission.

I thank you again for inviting me to share my thoughts and stand ready for any questions you may have at this time.