



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

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VIRGIN ISLANDS TAXICAB COMMISSION

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Vernice M. Gumbs
Executive Director

TESTIMONY OF LORETTA LLOYD
CHAIRPERSON – VIRGIN ISLANDS TAXICAB COMMISSION

35TH LEGISLATURE’S COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERAN’S
AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
MAY 31, 2023

Pleasant good day Chairperson Carla Joseph, Committee and Non-Committee Members, Board Members of the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission, Executive Director Vernice Gumbs, all persons attending this committee meeting whether in-person or virtually, the viewing and listening audience. My name is Loretta Lloyd, Chairperson of the Board of the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission.

The Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission was re-established as a semi-autonomous agency by Act No. 6968 on October 10th, 2007. It is comprised of a nine-member board appointed by the Governor of the Virgin Islands and approved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. The Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission is charged with the responsibility of regulating the automobile for hire industry.

In response to your specific concerns, I hereby submit the following information:

- (a) Rules and Regulations – the last promulgated Rules and Regulations are dated 1995. In 2010, the then Board approved updated Rules and Regulations which were transmitted to the Office of the Attorney General to be reviewed for legal sufficiency and subsequently transmitted to the legal counsel’s office of the

- Governor for promulgation. We have been diligently following up on the status of this document without success. It is important that we obtain this document as it would be representative of the most current updated version of the Rules and Regulations, thereby, giving the current board an opportunity to review and update further as needed.
- (b) **By-Laws – To the best of my knowledge there have not been any By-Laws established by prior boards. As such, it was critical for the current board to engage in a contract for legal services so that we can bring structure to the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. The final draft was presented to all members and ratified in March 2023.**
- (c) **BMV SOP Section 9.3 – Safari & Seating Capacity Policy – The Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission in collaboration with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles established policy in 2021 as it pertains to the vehicle commonly referred to as a safari and the seating capacity of automobiles for hire. Our federally funded roads are generally 9 feet wide each lane. Title 20 Virgin Islands Code Section 500 speaks about the width, length and loads of vehicles in the Virgin Islands. More specifically, it states that no vehicle shall be wider than 8 feet including all extensions. It has been determined that the majority of 25 passenger safaris are wider than the 8 feet allowable by law which should have never been allowed to happen. Taxi Commission does not inspect vehicles. That has always been the function of BMV. As a result, based on Title 20 Virgin Islands Code Section 403, the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission determines the seating capacity, and have determined that a maximum seating of 20-passengers for automobiles for hire is fair and reasonable.**

Our legal counsel is also charged with developing the structure for standing committees with the Board, developing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for our Taxi Inspectors who are all certified Peace Officers, and developing an Employee Handbook for our Administrative Staff. Unfortunately over the years, the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission has relied on

policies established by other agencies for guidance which cannot continue. Finally, we will have approved policies and procedures specific to this Agency.

As a result of Town Halls held on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John and collaboration with our industry operators, the updated tariff for automobiles for hire became a reality in October of 2022. I want to thank everyone for their due diligence in making this long waited increase a reality.

Since my last appearance before this committee, the board as hired Ms. Vernice Gumbs as its Executive Director which was like a breath of fresh air. Finally, we have an individual who is truly committed to structure, efficiency and effectiveness. Ms. Gumbs is responsible for the operational aspects of the Agency and I will ask that she be allowed to present the challenges she encountered and continues to encounter.

Our greatest challenge is building a great team. In 2018, when a compliment of four new board members were sworn in, there were already two members serving expired terms of more than ten years until replaced or reappointed, and one member who was serving his three-year term. The board should be a compliment of nine members and as such we were two members short. Establishing quorums for board meetings has been and continues to be our greatest challenge. As of today, there are still only seven members of which six members terms are now expired. A 3-month schedule for board meetings has been established in an effort to minimize the absenteeism and commit ourselves to do the work for which we have been sworn in to do on behalf of this Agency and the automobile for hire industry. I have spoken to the Governor several times since 2020 regarding the urgency to fill the vacancies as soon as possible.

I want to thank you for inviting me before your committee today to present our progress and our challenges since the last time we appeared before the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection. I am available to answer your questions, and if I am unable to, I will ask that you grant me the opportunity to provide the answers within a week. Thank you.