



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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VIRGIN ISLANDS TAXICAB COMMISSION

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TESTIMONY OF LORETTA LLOYD, CHAIRPERSON,
VIRGIN ISLANDS TAXICAB COMMISSION
ON BILL NO. 35-0186
NOVEMBER 21, 2023

Good afternoon Carla Joseph, Chairperson, Committee on Government Operations, Veteran Affairs and Consumer Protection, Committee Members, all persons present at this hearing, the viewing and listening public. My name is Loretta Lloyd, Chairperson, Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. Thank you for inviting me to present testimony on Bill No. 35-0186, An Act repealing and reenacting Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16, section 274 "Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission," and enacting in its place "The Division of Transportation and Taxicab Services"; and for other purposes.

Having taken the time to review the proposed legislation, specifically Bill No. 35-0186, I, Loretta Lloyd, will not be offering any support for reasons noted as follows:

- (1) At no point did this Committee or any member of the 35th Legislature offer to meet with the Board to discuss the myriad of issues and concerns that the current Board inherited, and to share solutions for the betterment of the Agency and the automobile for hire industry. We could have shared with you the numerous issues we inherited such as illegal

identification badges issued to individuals who failed or never completed the taxi classes conducted by UVI Cell; collection entries that

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were NEVER inputted to the ERP System of the Department of Finance; payroll increases that were in excess of the classified employee steps of the Department of Personnel; payroll processed to certain employees in violation of Title 23 Virgin Islands Code Section 1524 during COVID; disparity of collections between the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission and the Department of Finance, outdated equipment or lack thereof, insufficient staff to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission; Board members who are consistently absent from meetings resulting in the Board's failure to be more effective, and the failure of the Governor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Kevin Rodriguez, and Policy Advisor to Governor, Toya Malone, to nominate persons to fill the vacant positions on the Board despite the numerous requests made. In addition, I submitted names for consideration to no avail.

- (2) Playing a game of musical chairs with our automobile for hire operators by tossing it up and down, back and forth for what appears to be political reasons is very unconscionable and disrespectful to the last LOCAL BUSINESS in our territory. In fact, it appears that the sponsors of this proposed legislation are paving the way for the devaluation of the taxi medallions whom some have paid as much as \$60,000.00 so that they could provide a roof and food for their families. This is simply devastating.
- (3) Has anyone taken the time to review the Inspector General's Audit of 2005? If anyone did, then it's clear that the language in the proposed Bill 35-0186 is nothing more than political, and if no one has taken the time to review the IG Audit of 2005 maybe you should and you will understand why in October of 2007 Act 6968 was enacted to re-establish

the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. Why fathom a thought to reinvent a broken wheel? The Division of Taxi within the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs suffered loss of medallions, unaccountability, and misuse of funds.

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(4) The Board, from its inception, requested of the Legislature to return limousines to the proper regulatory Agency which is the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. Senator Marvin Blyden on many occasions stated that he had the bill to make the change. More than three years later absolutely NOTHING has been done. Instead DLCA continues to issue business licenses for limousines, who by law are NOT AUTOMOBILES FOR HIRE. If they are NOT automobiles for hire, what are they being licensed by DLCA to do? We have requested a copy of the rules and regulations by which DLCA issues these licenses and three years later we have yet to receive them. In the meantime, these so-called limousines are operating as taxis, don't have medallions, not required to have a class "C" designation on their driver's license, and simply operating vehicles that DO NOT CONFORM to the definition or standards of a LIMOUSINE. Your proposed legislation DOES NOT address limousines nor does it attempt to make things right.

(5) "The Division of Transportation" means what? Isn't the "Division of Transportation" under the Department of Public Works?

There is absolutely no need to disband the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. Instead (a) provide a full complement of Board members so that it can carry out its mandate; (b) provide funding for the digital transformation which is long overdue so that we can preserve the records of the medallion owners and industry operators in addition to having accountability; (c) provide funding so that we can hire a full complement of staff to include a total of ten enforcement officers territory-wide, a fiscal/HR officer, an Assistant Director to be stationed on the island of St. Croix, and clerical staff which is desperately needed.

TESTIMONY OF LORETTA LLOYD, CHAIRPERSON, VIRGIN ISLANDS

———— Last but not least, our industry operators are NOT IN FAVOR of proposed Bill No. 35-0186. They have been expressing themselves through many forums. These are our transportation ambassadors. They can make or break our tourism industry. It's time for everyone to respect these business owners who provide support for their families as automobile for hire operators.

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Thank you for giving me this opportunity to provide testimony on proposed Bill No. 35-0186.