

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF  
STEPHAN ADAMS, viNGN, INC. PRESIDENT & CEO  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCE  
35<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS  
May 20, 2024**

Good Afternoon Honorable Carla J. Joseph, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, Honorable Senators, and the listening and viewing audiences. I am Stephan Adams, President, and CEO of viNGN, Inc. Thank you for the invitation. I am honored to present to you today.

I have been invited to appear before this committee to provide a perspective on Bill No. 35-236. My testimony will focus on three areas. Firstly, is my support for this bill and the Bureau of Information Technology (BIT) to oversee this initiative. The second, is a proposal to consolidate all government websites into a [web portal](#). And third, is a recommendation to standardize Internet infrastructure across all government agencies.

However, I would like to begin with a statement of the relevance of viNGN in this hearing. viNGN is a public corporation that is an instrumentality of the U.S. Virgin Islands government (GVI). We are a wholly owned subsidiary of the Public Finance Authority (PFA). viNGN is an open access middle-mile provider of wholesale bandwidth. We sell to all the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the Territory. They in turn provide retail last-mile connectivity.

When viNGN's pure fiber network was built, its infrastructure was extended to every community anchor institution (CAI) in the Territory. It is important to note that every government location, including the hospitals, schools, police and fire stations, libraries, and legislative buildings, including this one, are directly connected to viNGN's network.

Now, my perspective on Bill 35-236. I fully support this bill. It is intelligent legislation that addresses modernization of government for the digital age. The pandemic was a pivotal point for all governments around the world. Those that offered complete digital services fared far better than those that lagged in providing citizen online facing services.

Although the Territory, like most small governments, was not fully prepared to initially transition to remote services during the pandemic, BIT did an excellent job of quickly adapting government services for online delivery. I am confident they will successfully execute the provisions of Bill 35-236.

This bill calls for the modernization of agency websites to a common standard of accessibility, functionality, and user experience. Bill 35-236 outlines basic specifications of these deliverables. However, as written, the bill could have unintended consequences if each agency is responsible for re-coding their own website. Agencies with less technical resources may be at a disadvantage and not be able to meet the requirements of this bill.

GVI's website currently presents links to each agency. This does not provide a consistent user experience or a common cyber security protocol. Therefore, I recommend the bill be amended whereby GVI would operate a portal to all government agencies. In this scenario, BIT would centrally manage the user experience and security of all GVI agency websites. However, each agency would use templates to control their individual web presence.

A centralized GVI website would enable Virgin Islanders to easily navigate between all agencies in a single online visit, ensuring a common user experience. It would also allow the use of a "shopping cart" for multiple service transactions. Payments would go directly to the respective agency's bank account. This approach aligns with common e-commerce portal experiences users expect. It would encourage greater use of virtual government services and it would also lower transaction costs and increase workflow efficiency.

Lastly, I encourage a provision be added to Bill 35-236 that requires all GVI agencies to boost their bandwidth speeds to 1Gbps and upgrade their network equipment to a modern uniformed standard that BIT would specify. BIT would negotiate a wholesale bandwidth price with viNGN for all GVI agencies.

This recommendation enhances the objectives of Bill 35-236. Its aim is to also empower GVI workers with modern tools to better serve Virgin Islanders online in the age of the Internet of Everything.

This concludes my written remarks. Thank you for your attention to my testimony. I look forward to addressing any questions you have.

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