

Kerry Harrigan

Testimony in Support of Bill No. 35-0251: An Act Amending Title 3 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 16, Section 274**

Good morning Chair Carla Joseph, other members of the 35th Legislature and the listening public. I stand before you today to express my strong support for Bill No. 35-0251, which proposes significant amendments to the current structure and oversight of the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. The rebranding to the Virgin Islands Taxicab and Limousine Commission (VITLC) and the expansion of its oversight authority to include limousine service operators is a timely and necessary evolution for our transportation industry.

As we all know, the tourism sector is a vital part of our economy, and providing reliable, safe, and high-quality transportation services is essential to enhancing the visitor experience. By formally incorporating limousine services into the Commission's purview, we can ensure that all forms of passenger transport within our territory adhere to the same high standards of safety and service that we expect from our taxicab operators.

This bill, sponsored by Senator Marvin A. Blyden, addresses several essential aspects that will benefit both operators and passengers:

1. ****Standardization of Regulations****: Establishing a unified regulatory body to oversee both taxicabs and limousines will enable us to implement consistent standards that foster professionalism and accountability across all transportation services. Ms. Gumbs is currently overwhelmed and understaffed, highlighting the need for additional staffing and support to ensure a smooth transition that works effectively for everyone involved. Additionally, the Department of Motor Vehicles should assist in inspecting any vehicle for hire to ensure compliance with highway standards.

2. ****Enhanced Consumer Protection****: Expanding the Commission's authority will better protect consumers from potential abuses, ensuring fair pricing, safety, and quality service, regardless of the type of vehicle they choose. To achieve this, there needs to be improved impartiality and enforcement, necessitating the hiring of more officers.

3. ****Support for Local Businesses****: This bill will create a framework that encourages local limousine operators to function within a regulated environment, promoting fair competition and supporting local entrepreneurship. It is crucial to address the infiltration of hotels and other businesses that receive Economic Development Commission (EDC) benefits, as they are unfairly competing with local small business owners.

4. ****Economic Growth****: By enhancing the regulatory framework within the transportation sector, we can improve our tourism product, ultimately contributing to job creation and economic development in the Virgin Islands. Given the constantly evolving transportation needs of our islands, it is essential that Limousine Services are regulated fairly and effectively.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support Bill No. 35-0251. It is a progressive step toward modernizing our transportation industry, ensuring that it meets the needs of both residents and visitors while

promoting a safe and reliable service. I urge the Committee to favorably consider this bill and commend Senator Blyden for his vision and commitment to improving our community.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Kerry Harrigan
Manager
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