

35th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS AND HUMAN SERVICES

CHAIRPERSON – HONORABLE RAY FONSECA

Wednesday, December 6, 2023



VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TESTIMONY ON:

Bill No. 35-0187 - An Act amending title 19, part V, chapter 45, by adding subchapter XI, titled Extreme Risk Protection Orders, to allow a family or household member, law enforcement officer, healthcare worker, educator or co-worker to intervene and file a court petition to temporarily confiscate and ban a person's access to guns for one year if that person is deemed to be a risk to themselves or others



1 Good day, Honorable Ray Fonseca Chair of the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human
2 Services, committee members, other Senators present, and the listening and viewing audiences.

3 I am Averil E. George, Commissioner Nominee for the Virgin Islands Department of Human
4 Services (VIDHS). I apologize as my Senior Leadership Team and I are unable to participate in
5 today's hearing. We respectfully request to have the Department's testimony read into the
6 record.

7 I would like to extend thank yous to my hardworking team at VIDHS. They demonstrate
8 dedication every day and I am proud to be their Commissioner Nominee. As to the bill before
9 us, Bill No. 35-0187– "An Act amending title 19, part V, chapter 45, by adding subchapter XI,
10 titled Extreme Risk Protection Orders, to allow a family or household member, law enforcement
11 officer, healthcare worker, educator or co-worker to intervene and file a court petition to
12 temporarily confiscate and ban a person's access to guns for one year if that person is deemed
13 to be a risk to themselves or others" we are happy for his opportunity to provide testimony.

14 The Department understands the intent of the bill and fully agrees that proactive measures taken
15 to prevent tragedies when indicators are present could possibly prevent loss of lives and other
16 negative consequences. We support the spirit of the legislation, but have concerns about the
17 wide latitude given to a large group of persons to initiate legal actions that can have far-reaching
18 effects on the rights and protected information of others. We are also concerned about the lack
19 of safe/guards/protection in place for petitioners as well as potential victims if the proposed
20 actions are taken.



21 As I conclude this testimony, I am very appreciative of my Executive Branch colleagues,
22 members of this legislative body, Governor Albert Bryan, Jr., and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza
23 Roach. We at VIDHS will continue to live out our commitment to **“Working Together to Make**
24 **a Difference”** for the people of the Virgin Islands. Thank you.