



# VIRGIN ISLANDS PORT AUTHORITY

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Gateways to the U.S. Virgin Islands and its Economy

## TESTIMONY

Good morning Honorable Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairman of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, and to the distinguished members of the Committee and other senators in attendance, the legislative staff, and the listening and viewing audience. My name is Edred Wilkes Jr., the Police Chief for the Virgin Islands Port Authority's St. Thomas/St. John District. Accompanying me is Ms. Marisa Turnbull Smith, the Administrative Officer and Airport Security Coordinator for the St. Thomas/St. John District. We are here today on behalf of VIPA Executive Director Carlton Dowe who extends his apologies that he could not attend today's hearing due to a scheduling conflict.

Director Dowe received your letter dated September 20, 2023, inviting VIPA to testify regarding Bill No. 35-0086. This Bill is an Act

amending Title 3 VI Code Chapter 1, Section 10-H to require background checks for all Information Technology personnel and employees of the Bureau of Information, agencies that have data centers, and any employee who handles classified information. VIPA fully supports this measure. Moreover, the Authority has already implemented the process of background checks not just for our confidential employees but for all employees hired to work within the aviation, marine, and administrative divisions. This is standard operational procedure for the agency and is implemented for employees hired to work in both districts. Background checks and drug tests are performed, and results must be received with a favorable report before an employee can begin work. The applicant only pays for the police report. All other associated fees regarding background checks are currently paid for by the Authority.

VIPA also works with the U.S. Department of Transportation via the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to perform routine background checks annually for employees who are issued identification badges granting access to secured areas of our facilities. If this routine check reveals an incident that occurred after the employee was hired, their badges can be revoked, and their employment status will be evaluated.

The Virgin Islands Port Authority is committed to providing safe working environments and facilities for the traveling public as we execute our mandate to support the territory's economy, tourism industry and facilitate commerce. Our dedication to safe operations includes protecting both physical and cyber equipment and data at our offices and our ports. VIPA will support and comply with any measure implemented by this body that is designed to keep sensitive data out of the hands of criminals and those with malicious intentions.

That concludes my testimony, and Ms. Turnbull Smith and I are prepared to answer any questions you may have concerning this matter.