**THIRTHY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Chairperson Kenneth L. Gittens**

**Tuesday, October 10, 2023**

Good morning Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairperson of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, Committee Members, members of the 35th Legislature, legislative staff, members of my Executive Team, and to the listening and viewing audience. I am Ray A. Martinez, Police Commissioner of Virgin Islands Police Department. Thank you for providing my team and I the opportunity to testify on Bill Number 35-0127, “an Act amending Title 14 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 89, relating to the invasion of privacy of accident and crime victims by first responders.

Chairperson Gittens, the VIPD cautiously supports this measure but will yield to the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands for further guidance and testimony. VIPD however, does not take the forbidden dissemination of information lightly. To that end, it is a violation of VIPD’s policies and procedures to obtain and disclose crime and accident scenes or victim information without a legitimate law enforcement purpose. Policy violations can lead to discipline up to and including termination.

Additionally, this bill appears light-handed. If the intent is to serve as a deterrent for illegally sharing sensitive crime or victim information, then the penalty should not solely be a misdemeanor punishable by a fine. Based upon the egregiousness of the act, the ability to charge the action as a felony should be available.

Senator Gittens, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Bill No. 35-0127. My Team and I stand ready to answer your questions.