



GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS  
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM



December 11, 2023

VIA EMAIL TO: Senator. Kenneth L. Gittens: [senatorgittens@legvi.org](mailto:senatorgittens@legvi.org)

The Honorable Kenny Gittens  
Senate Majority Leader, 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands  
Chair, Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety  
Capitol Building  
3022 Golden Rock  
Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802

**Re: 2023-2024 Crucian Christmas Festival**

Dear Senator Gittens:

Please find the Division of Festival's testimony on behalf of the Department of Tourism herein for the meeting of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands' Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at the Frits Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room on St. Croix.

Sincerely,  
Ian Turnbull  
Director  
USVI Division of Festivals

Shamari Haynes  
Deputy Commissioner  
USVI Department of Tourism

**TESTIMONY SENATE HEARING 12/12**

Good morning, distinguished Senators of the 35th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, Legislative Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen in the chamber, members of the media, and the viewing and listening audience. I am Shamari Haynes, Deputy Commissioner at the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism.

On behalf of our Commissioner of Tourism, the Honorable Joseph Boschulte, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety to provide an update on the safety procedures for the 2023-2024 Crucian Christmas Festival scheduled for December 26, 2023, to January 6, 2024.

As we approach the 71<sup>st</sup> iteration of our beloved Christmas Festival, we are constantly reminded of the purpose behind the actions. Established to create a sense of community, and camaraderie while honoring our rich and vibrant culture, Crucian Christmas Festival has grown into an annual celebration which allows locals and visitors alike to peacefully revel in commemoration of our Caribbean roots.

The Festival's significance has grown beyond simply a local gathering and as we continue to elevate the supplementary events surrounding Crucian Christmas Festival, it has also become an opportunity to showcase local artists and provide them with a platform to highlight their talent to the world. This growth in return contributes to increased tourism and significant contributions to the economic base of the Virgin Islands community.

As we aim to continuously elevate and compete with other destinations in the region, we rely heavily on strategic marketing efforts that have spawned successful results as exhibited by the many sold out hotels rooms and rental cars for the Festival's main week. The media strategy which is centered around the "St. Croix: A Vibe Like No Other" promotion includes regular dispersal of information to local and international media (radio, print and digital), social media ad placement, off-island billboards, and digital advertising in key markets.

This year's free Village Night concerts provide an anchor for the Festival season where we welcome in international stars like Davido, Caribbean stars like Destra and Patreece Roberts and homegrown stars who have taken the world by storm like Adam O for seven nights of dancing and excitement.

Today, we are excited to share the strategic interagency plan we have curated over the last nine months that will lead to a safe, accessible, and fun-filled Festival for everyone to experience.

- USVI Division of Festivals has hosted weekly agency meetings with VIPD, DPW, VITEMA, VINGN, & VIWMA starting from July 2023.
- USVI Division of Festivals has also worked in tandem with VIPD and VITEMA on a daily security strategy to ensure safety for the community at the various events.
- Festival meetings have detailed plans for parking, parade and J'ouvert strategy and run-of-show details for all supporting agencies.
- Festivals weekly meetings have provided an opportunity for all assisting agencies to give their input into the execution of a safe, accessible, and fun-filled Festival.
- Some numbers for the various Festival stakeholders are as follows:
  - 28 Registered Booths
  - 19 Registered Food Fair Applicants (*NOTE: this number doesn't include the number of vendors who will be on hand with the Cruise ship that will be in Frederiksted on that day*)
  - 7 Registered Adult Parade Troupes
    - An estimated between 5000 and 7000 revelers
  - 3 Registered Children Parade Troupes
    - An estimated 1000 revelers
  - The VI Department of Police has facilitated the registration of spaces on the parades & J'ouvert route and can best speak to those numbers.
- USVI Division of Festivals will create a schematic map drawn up of the Village that will showcase the location of public bathrooms, booths (numbers/names), all entry and exit points, and designated parking locations. This map will be promoted on our Festival social pages, website, and with media partners.
- USVI Division of Festivals will create a map of the parade route to be disseminated to troupe leaders, across Festival social pages, website, and with media partners.

## Summary

The Department of Tourism and Division of Festivals is committed to continuously spotlighting the Territory

while ensuring we stay true to our cultural essence, making us a top destination in the Caribbean for authentic experiences.

Senators, our team has done the work necessary to leave an indelible mark on all who experience our shores during Festival season. Our collaboration with our partner agencies VIPD, DPW, VITEMA, VINGN, and VIWMA is a testament to great interagency partnership, which will be evident during this year's Festival.

In closing, the Department of Tourism's Division of Festivals remains dedicated to collaborating with our agency partners to ensure the safety of all who attend the Crucian Christmas Festival and surrounding events. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Our team looks forward to your questions.

ENDS