PREPARED STATEMENT OF
STEPHAN ADAMS, viNGN PRESIDENT & CEO
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE &
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
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Good morning, Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, Chairman of the Committee on Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure & Telecommunications, Honorable Senators, and the listening and viewing audiences. I am Stephan Adams, President, and CEO of viNGN, Inc., I am honored to present to you today.

I would like to begin my testimony today on a positive note. There is a significant amount of federal dollars in or coming to the territory for broadband projects. For viNGN, we are using obligated FEMA funds towards our recovery efforts from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We are aggressively undertaking projects to restore, mitigate and build resiliency into our network.

Additionally, there is upwards of $40 million allocated by NTIA for broadband equity, access and affordability programs administered through OMB. This is in addition to the $84.5 million awarded to Liberty from the FCC for building a modern fiber network to deliver high speed Internet service to every home and business in the Territory. This tremendous amount of funding <u>should</u> ultimately result in Virgin Islanders having greater access to high-speed Internet at more affordable rates once these projects are in full swing. However, as the FCC's award to Liberty locks out the Territory from receiving any additional broadband funding until 2030, we are hoping that Liberty will use this funding to bring Internet pricing in the Territory down.

For our part, viNGN is laser focused, this year, on three priorities. Our first priority is completing $12.5 million in FEMA obligated restoration projects and the design and engineering on an additional $7.1 million in mitigation to upgrade and modernize all 24 of our Fiber Access Points (FAPs). The forementioned resiliency projects will begin, and in some instances continue, in earnest once we have secured $1.2 million for the 10% cost share. We have applied for this funding with ODR. See Exhibit A for a list of obligated FEMA and other federal grant projects.

Our second priority is to continue the expansion of Wi-Fi in public places. viNGN has deployed over 80 Free Internet hotspots throughout all four islands and counting. We aim to reach over 100 locations by the end of this year. We have partnered with the Department of Parks and Recreation to install Wi-Fi at nearly <u>all</u> public parks in the Territory. We also collaborated with DPNR to ensure all libraries are equipped with free Wi-Fi inside and outside of their building.

Critical facilities such as both hospitals, DHS and the Department of Health now have free Wi-Fi. You can also access the viNGN's Wi-Fi network at the St. Croix airport and soon at the St. Thomas airport. We will push to cover five commercial districts with free Wi-Fi by the end of the year. These areas include, Main Street, Christiansted and Frederiksted boardwalks, Red Hook, and Cruz Bay areas. It is important to remind you that viNGN first deployed free Wi-Fi to multiple locations at <u>all</u> housing communities managed by the VI Housing Authority.

viNGN's third priority for 2024 is the continuation of our community engagement activities in promoting FCC's ACP. This program allows low-income residents to receive a $30 credit to for basic Internet service and a $100 credit towards a device such as a tablet or a computer.

We are also engaging the community in understanding their digital access needs and their perception of service quality and affordability in the Territory through a survey. You too can participate in our community survey by scanning the QR code on my printed testimony or on your TV screen with your mobile phone.

This survey and associated outreach are requirements under our $150,000 NTIA Digital Equity planning grant. viNGN has conducted six community listening sessions and have had one-on-one meetings with government agencies, community organizations, and small businesses that are stakeholders in closing the digital divide in the Territory. We are compiling information learned from these engagements along with the data from the survey to develop a digital equity plan that will be submitted to NTIA for capacity funding consideration. This plan will be published for public comment by the end of February.

All of viNGN's infrastructure objectives are to ensure all our ISP partners have a modern infrastructure for their customers to download and upload HD content from multiple access points within a home, business, or agency affordably. viNGN is a middle-mile carrier of bandwidth infrastructure; end-user access depends on ISPs to provide "last mile" connectivity. This includes in-home or in-business installation of routers to access the Internet, billing, and technical support. Although viNGN is exploring diversified revenue opportunities, we will not engage in direct last mile

Internet service delivery to consumers and businesses. This includes government agencies, who are serviced by BIT, one of viNGN's ISP partners.

In conclusion, viNGN is entering a transformative phase where we are pursuing "whole solution" opportunities where we can leverage our network to address territory-wide broadband issues. Topping our agenda is cyber security and the Internet of Thing, know as IoT. We will invest and seek funding to integrate cyber security functions directly into our core network for low layer protection for all users that access the viNGN network. We will also enable our Wi-Fi infrastructure to allow the deployment of Internet aware devices such as surveillance cameras to help fight crime.

viNGN will soon increase bandwidth speeds for all ISP for the same price they pay today soon. This is our commitment to honoring our mandate of lowering Internet cost in the Territory for all our ISPs.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony. I look forward to addressing any questions you have.

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Exhibit A

Federal Grants Summary

Active/Obligated Projects Only

1/22/2024

No	ID	Agency	Project Type	Island	FEMA/OMB Obligated	viNGN Obligated	Expended/ Invoiced	Requested Reimbursement	Reimbursement Received
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
1	PW 89405	FEMA	Communications Infrastructure - Hurricane Repairs	STT	$ 912,550	$ 912,550	$ 511,465	$ 317,577	$ 130,514
2	PW 89402	FEMA	Communications Infrastructure - Hurricane Repairs	STX	3,120,489	3,120,489	1,440,012	509,540	435,175
3	PW 70673	FEMA	Communications Infrastructure - Hurricane Repairs	STJ	4,196,723	0	0	0	0
4	PW 79411	FEMA	Communications Infrastructure - Hurricane Repairs	WTR	85,256	85,256	71,205	0	0
5	PW 79073	FEMA	FAPs (Repairs & Contents) - St. Thomas	STT	140,187	145,593	145,593	145,593	0
6	PW 78643	FEMA	FAPs (Repairs & Contents) - St. John	STJ	11,728	0	0	0	0
7	PW 79117	FEMA	Fiber Optic Landing Sites - St. Thomas	STT	2,273,082	0	0	0	0
8	PW 78269	FEMA	Fiber Optic Landing Sites - St. Croix	STX	1,686,380	0	0	0	0
9	PW 78244	FEMA	FAPs (Repairs & Contents) - St. Croix	STX	65,438	48,975	48,975	0	0
10		FEMA	FEMA Hurricane 404 Mitigation Phase 1 & Phase 2	USVI	7,117,829	483,000	283,000	117,700	117,700
			Sub-Total FEMA		**$ 19,609,662**	**$ 4,795,863**	**$ 2,500,250**	**$ 1,090,410**	**$ 683,389**
10	SLFRP3818	OMB - ARPA	Community Wi-Fi - Communications, Network, Hardwar	USVI	3,176,071	3,101,940	3,091,524	3,101,939.70	3,101,940
11	SLFRP3818	OMB - ARPA	Community Wi-Fi - Equipment & Build Costs	USVI	1,602,850	1,602,850	735,822	620,854	620,854
12	SLFRP3818	OMB - ARPA	Community Wi-Fi - Bandwidth	USVI	6,000,000	1,756,667	1,756,667	1,756,667	1,666,667
			Sub-Total OMB/DOI		**$ 10,778,921**	**$ 6,461,457**	**$ 5,584,013**	**$ 5,479,461**	**$ 5,389,461**
13	ACOGP2340006-00	FCC	Affordability Connectivy Program (ACP)	USVI	250,000	250,000	14,198	-	-
14	78-30-DP146	NTIA	Digital Equity	USVI	150,000	150,000	69,077	69,077	150,000
			Sub-Total Other (FCC & NTIA)		**$ 400,000**	**$ 400,000**	**$ 83,275**	**$ 69,077**	**$ 150,000**
			GRAND TOTAL		**$ 30,788,583**	**$ 11,657,320**	**$ 8,167,537**	**$ 6,638,947**	**$ 6,222,850**