

# ODARI C. THOMAS

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May 8, 2023

Diane T. Capehart  
Senator, 35 Legislature of the US Virgin Islands  
3022 Estate Golden Rock  
Christiansted, VI 00820

Dear Senator Capehart:

I am writing to testify on behalf of Anna Wallace Francis, who has been nominated to the Virgin Islands Territorial Park Board of Trustees for the District of St. Thomas. It is my honor to highly recommend Anna Wallace Francis to serve on the Board of Trustees.

I am one of the original Environmental Rangers, an environmental youth group comprised of several young men and women, founded by Mr. & Mrs. Francis, and Mr. Leba OlaNiyi. Through the Rangers, Mrs. Francis helped to mold and shape me and many others into upstanding adults by providing us with a safe environment in which to grow and develop while cultivating our interest in exploring and preserving the natural elements of the Virgin Islands. Mrs. Francis facilitated our exploration of each island by personally planning, organizing, scheduling and funding multiple trips across the territory. Each trip seamlessly exposed us to varying aspects of our local culture and heritage while simultaneously immersing us in our natural environment. I have planted, camped, hiked, fished, kayaked and snorkeled on each gem of an island as an Environmental Ranger and Mrs. Francis orchestrated it all.

Mrs. Francis has served her native community of St. Thomas in so many ways during her lifetime. The Environmental Rangers kept many young people in this community, including myself, from going astray by offering an outlet for our energy and talents. It also allowed us to form lifelong friendships with people that we might not have known otherwise. Mrs. Francis is also a fervent culture bearer and has participated in many culture-based activities including the Agricultural Fair, Afternoon on the Green, the Bordeaux Farmer's Market, etc. Mrs. Francis and her husband also own and maintain a campground in Estate Mandahl that has hosted many commemorative events for members of this community. All this in addition to having served valiantly as a science teacher in the Virgin Islands Public Education System for over 30 years. She continues to volunteer in several community organizations during her retirement.

I have zero doubt that Mrs. Francis will contribute greatly to the Virgin Islands Territorial Park Board because she is a person that genuinely understands the complex issues that the Board is facing. She has worked tirelessly as an environmentalist advocating for the protection of our natural resources that make the Virgin Islands unique. Quite frankly, appointing her to the board will simply be a continuation of the work that she has already been doing for most of her adult life. She genuinely cares about the Virgin Islands, our people and our culture.

I cannot offer a stronger recommendation and I am certain that selecting her to serve on the Virgin Islands Territorial Park Board of Trustees for the District of St. Thomas would have a positive impact on our Islands. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Odari C. Thomas