



PO Box 5983 | Christiansted, VI 00823
1-866-389-5633 | Fax: 340-692-2544 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598
aarp.org/vi | viaarp@aarp.org | twitter: @AARPMVI
facebook.com/aarpvi

**Testimony of AARP Virgin Islands Before the
Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports and Parks
Bill No. 36-0099 – Amendment to the Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Prevention Act**

Honorable Chairman Bolques, Jr., sponsor of this measure, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

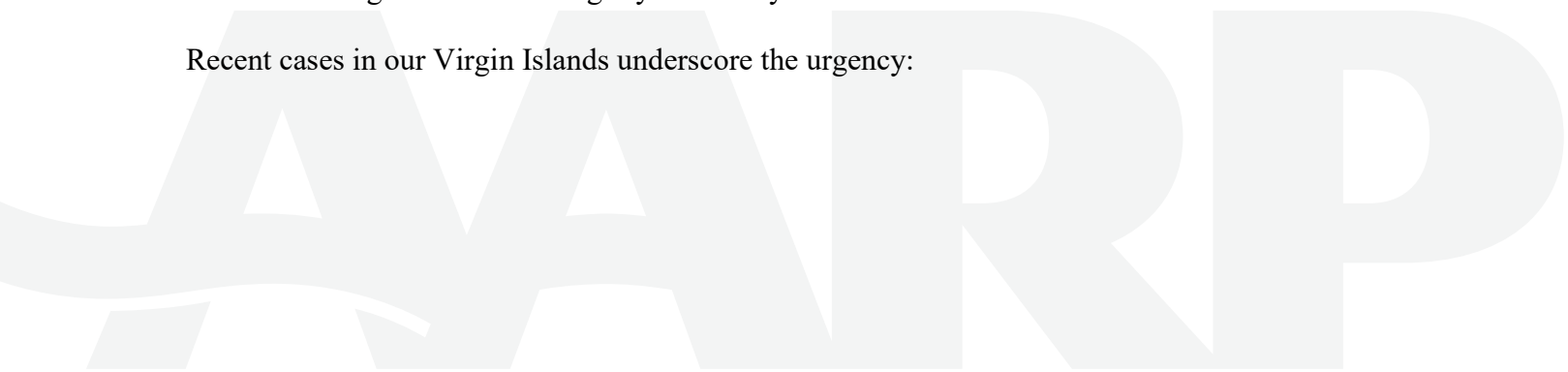
On behalf of AARP—representing more than 100 million Americans age 50 and older, including over 22,000 right here in the Virgin Islands—it is my privilege to express our strong support for Bill No. 36-0099, which amends the Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Prevention Act.

My name is Troy de Chabert-Schuster, and I serve as the State Director of AARP in the Virgin Islands. I appear before you not only in that role, but also as a proud Virgin Islander, deeply shaped by the wisdom, resilience, and sacrifices of our elders. They are our culture bearers, our matriarchs and patriarchs, and the builders of our beloved territory. They deserve not just our gratitude and respect, but also our active protection under the law.

The Urgency of Elder Protection

Elder abuse is not an abstract problem—it is a harsh reality in our islands. Too often it is hidden in silence, whether in the form of financial exploitation, physical harm, neglect, or psychological manipulation. Each case represents not just a crime, but a betrayal of trust and a violation of the fundamental right to live with dignity and safety.

Recent cases in our Virgin Islands underscore the urgency:



- On St. Croix, an elderly man was defrauded of more than \$60,000 by a caretaker-style scheme, and he passed away with his final months overshadowed by loss and betrayal.
- On St. Thomas, a 90-year-old woman was exploited out of \$100,000 in an alleged conspiracy involving a bank teller—an insider scheme that stripped her of savings and financial security.
- This past June, on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, an elderly Virgin Islander was beaten so severely in his own home that he later died from his injuries.

These are not statistics. These are our neighbors, our family members, our community’s elders—the very people who built the foundation of the Virgin Islands we love today. Their lives demand more than sympathy. They demand action.

Bill No. 36-0099 – Closing the Gaps

In 2019, this Legislature took a historic step with Act No. 8318, laying a strong foundation for the protection of elders and dependent adults. Yet, as impactful as that law was, it left gaps.

Training was limited, interagency coordination inconsistent, and without a registry, repeat offenders could too easily regain positions of trust.

In 2023, AARP convened a working group—including the VI Department of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Justice Elder Justice Division, the Board of Nurse Licensure, the Bar Association, prosecutors, medical professionals, and advocates. Together, we studied real cases and developed solutions.

Bill No. 36-0099 reflects two of the most urgent recommendations from that effort:

- A Permanent Multi-Disciplinary Protection Team to review high-risk cases, strengthen coordination, and drive systemic improvements.

- An Elder & Dependent Adult Abuse Registry to ensure that convicted abusers are permanently barred from positions of trust.

These measures are not theoretical. They are practical, enforceable safeguards crafted from lived experience and expert input.

Building on Momentum

Just last month, AARP and the Department of Human Services co-hosted the Elder Justice Summit, bringing together prosecutors, law enforcement, social workers, caregivers, and financial institutions. That dialogue reinforced the urgency of this crisis and produced new strategies such as streamlined reporting protocols and enhanced caregiver support. Bill No. 36-0099 is an essential step forward, but we know more work remains. As perpetrators adapt, we must continue to strengthen our defenses.

AARP is committed to advancing the next phase of elder protection legislation and ensuring the Virgin Islands remains at the forefront of elder justice.

Conclusion & Call to Action

Honorable Senators, what lies before you is not just another bill. It is a test of our values, our resolve, and our duty to protect the most vulnerable among us. This measure builds on the foundation you laid in 2019, incorporates the expertise of the 2023 working group, and brings forward enforceable solutions rooted in our community's reality.

By passing Bill No. 36-0099, you will send a clear message: the Virgin Islands will not turn its back on its elders. We will protect them, honor them, and ensure they can live with dignity, respect, and security—not fear.

On behalf of AARP and the 22,000 members we represent in the Virgin Islands, I respectfully urge you to act boldly and decisively. Pass Bill No. 36-0099, and in doing so, safeguard the well-being of our greatest treasures—our people.

Thank you.