

**Virgin Islands Housing Authority**  
**Semi-Autonomous Agency**

**TESTIMONY**

**36<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands**

***Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture***



**Dwayne Alexander, CPM**  
**Executive Director**

## Introductions

Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Frederick, Chairman of the Committee on Economic Development & Agriculture; Vice-Chair Bogue; and distinguished members of the Committee. Good afternoon to the other distinguished Senators present, legislative staff, the citizens of the U.S. Virgin Islands, the dedicated employees of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, and all members of the public in attendance and listening.

My name is Dwayne Alexander, and I serve as Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to address a central question before this Committee: how federal resources are being translated into measurable economic development, workforce participation, and long-term economic stability within the Territory.

While the Virgin Islands Housing Authority is not a direct recipient of the specific federal awards under review, we administer significant federal housing investments through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. These investments are not theoretical or passive in nature they are actively deployed across the Territory to create jobs, generate economic activity, support local businesses, stabilize families, and ultimately strengthen the economic foundation of the Virgin Islands.

Our work sits at the intersection of housing policy and economic development, and today I will clearly demonstrate how housing investment is functioning as a catalyst for workforce participation, business growth, and long-term economic stability.

### **Workforce Development and Job Creation**

VIHA's most direct contribution to economic development is through the federally mandated Section 3 Program. This program ensures that economic opportunities generated by federal housing investments are directed, to the greatest extent feasible, to low- and very low-income residents and local businesses within the Territory.

To date, VIHA's redevelopment activities have generated more than 241,000 labor hours across major projects. These efforts have resulted in 32 new hires and approximately 10 active contracts involving general contractors and subcontractors.

It is important to emphasize that under HUD requirements, performance is measured in labor hours rather than simply headcount. Those 241,000 labor hours represent real wages paid to Virgin Islands residents' income that is circulating within our local economy, supporting families, and contributing to overall economic activity.

At the same time, the contracts associated with these projects represent real opportunities for local businesses to grow, build capacity, and position themselves for future public and private sector work.

In this way, federal housing dollars are not leaving the Territory they are being reinvested locally, strengthening both our workforce and our business community.

### **Workforce Participation and Economic Mobility**

Beyond job creation, VIHA is intentionally focused on advancing long term economic mobility for the residents we serve. This is achieved through structured programs such as the Family Self Sufficiency Program and the Bright Path Initiative.

Currently, 31 residents are actively enrolled in the Family Self Sufficiency Program. Through this program, participants receive individualized case management, employment support, financial literacy training, and structured opportunities to build savings.

As participants increase their earned income, they can accumulate funds in escrow accounts, creating a pathway toward financial independence. This is not simply a support service it is a workforce development strategy that prepares individuals to transition from assistance to sustained economic participation.

The long-term impact of this work is significant. As residents increase income, improve financial stability, and enter the workforce, they contribute to the broader economy through spending, productivity, and reduced reliance on public assistance.

### **Housing Production as Economic Infrastructure**

VIHA currently has 250 housing units under development across key sites within the Territory. This includes 84 units at Estate Donoe, 106 units at D. Hamilton Jackson, and 60 units at Tutu Senior Housing.

In Fiscal Year 2025 alone, VIHA has invested approximately \$136 million, which includes redevelopment activity across these sites as well as WIM Hodge, consisting of 248 units. The total investment across major developments at Hamilton and Donoe is approximately \$249 million.

These figures represent more than construction activity they reflect large scale economic investment. Each project supports jobs, generates demand for materials and services, and contributes to the overall stability of the Territory's housing market.

Housing must be understood as critical economic infrastructure. Without adequate and affordable housing, the Territory cannot retain workers, cannot attract talent, and cannot sustain long term economic growth.

### **Multi-Sector Economic Impact**

The scale of VIHA's redevelopment investment is generating economic activity across multiple sectors, including construction, engineering, architecture, environmental services, compliance, logistics, and long-term property management.

These activities create both immediate employment opportunities and sustained economic engagement across industries. It also increases demand for local vendors, suppliers, and professional services, further strengthening the Territory's economic ecosystem.

Housing investment, therefore, should be understood as a multiplier one that extends far beyond housing itself and into the broader economy.

### **Small Business Development and Local Contracting**

Through Section 3 and targeted procurement practices, VIHA is also supporting the development of local businesses. To date, approximately 10 contracts have been awarded in connection with redevelopment efforts.

These opportunities allow local contractors and subcontractors to gain experience, build capacity, and participate meaningfully in federally funded projects.

This approach ensures that public investment remains within the Territory, strengthens the local business base, and reduces reliance on external firms.

### **Infrastructure, Resilience, and Sustainability**

VIHA's redevelopment efforts incorporate modern construction standards designed to enhance resilience and sustainability. These include hurricane resistant design, energy efficient systems, and upgraded infrastructure.

These investments not only protect public assets but also reduce long-term operating costs and improve the overall quality of housing for residents.

In a region vulnerable to natural disasters, resilient infrastructure is not optional it is essential to economic continuity and long-term stability.

### **Constraints**

While VIHA is producing measurable results, our ability to expand this impact is constrained by several factors, including rising construction costs, limited capital funding, and increasing demand for affordable housing.

There is a direct relationship between investment and economic output. As redevelopment activity increases, so too do job creation, business opportunities, and economic growth.

### **Opportunity and Path Forward**

There is a clear opportunity to expand VIHA's contribution to economic development through increased investment in housing redevelopment, stronger coordination with workforce and economic development agencies, and continued emphasis on local hiring and contracting through Section 3.

The return on investment is already evident: over 241,000 labor hours generated, 250 units under development, and approximately \$249 million in economic activity.

With additional support and strategic alignment, these outcomes can be significantly expanded to further benefit the Territory.

### **Closing**

In closing, the Virgin Islands Housing Authority must be understood not solely as a housing provider, but as a central economic development partner within the Territory.

Our work demonstrates that housing investment is directly tied to workforce development, business growth, and economic stability. Through the creation of jobs, the support of local contractors, the development of housing infrastructure, and the advancement of resident self sufficiency, VIHA is actively contributing to the economic future of the Virgin Islands.

Every labor hour generated represents income for a family. Every contract awarded represents an opportunity for a local business. Every unit developed represents stability for a household and strength for our workforce.

Simply put, every dollar invested in housing through VIHA is not an expense it is an investment in jobs, in businesses, and in the long-term economic stability of this Territory.

I thank you for your leadership, your oversight, and your continued commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.