

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT JULY 14TH, 2026



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Good morning, Honorable Senator Kurt Vialet, Chairman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development; Honorable Senator Avery Lewis, Vice Chairman; distinguished members of the Committee; members of the 36th Legislature; and the viewing and listening public.

My name is Craig Benjamin, Executive Director of the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance (BSCM). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide an update on the Bureau's efforts to prepare the Territory's educational facilities for the opening of the 2026–2027 academic year.

Joining me this morning are Mr. Paul Harrigan, Assistant Director of School Maintenance; Ms. Cynthia Allen, Assistant Director of School Construction; Dr. Charmaine Mayers, Chief Financial Officer; Mr. Jayson Parrilla, Deputy Director of School Construction; Mr. Antoine Magras, Facilities Maintenance Assistant Manager for the St. Thomas–St. John District; and Mr. Bobby Ferris, Facilities Maintenance Assistant Manager for the St. Croix District.

The Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance remains steadfast in its commitment to providing safe, healthy, and functional learning environments for our students, educators, administrators, and support staff. Throughout the year, the Bureau has balanced emergency response efforts, routine and preventive maintenance, and major capital improvement projects while continuing to address decades of deferred maintenance throughout the Virgin Islands public school system.

Preparing our schools for each academic year is a year-round responsibility. It requires careful planning, collaboration with the Department of Education and our stakeholders, strategic prioritization of available resources, and a dedicated team committed to ensuring that our schools are ready to support teaching and learning. Today's testimony will provide an overview of our Fiscal Year 2026 maintenance and capital improvement investments, our summer school readiness initiatives, the status of ongoing projects, and our continued efforts to improve educational facilities across both the St. Croix and St. Thomas–St. John Districts.

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Executive Summary

Fiscal Year 2026 has been a productive year for the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance as we continue to address deferred maintenance, improving educational facilities, and preparing schools for the 2026–2027 academic year.

During Fiscal Year 2026, BSCM invested **\$4,027,264.63** in maintenance and capital improvement projects across the Territory's educational facilities. In preparation for the new school year, the Bureau also launched its annual Summer Maintenance Initiative and began implementing **\$2.1 million** in school readiness projects, with **\$1.05 million** allocated to each school district.

Through a combination of preventive maintenance, capital improvements, and strategic partnerships with the Department of Labor Summer Youth Employment Program and the Department of Education School Lunch Program, BSCM has worked diligently to improve the safety, functionality, and overall condition of school facilities while minimizing disruptions to classroom instruction.

Although several larger capital improvement projects will continue into the school year, the Bureau is coordinating closely with contractors and school administrators to ensure that schools are safe, operational, and prepared to welcome students and staff for the opening of the 2026–2027 academic year.

Fiscal Year 2026 Investments

During Fiscal Year 2026, the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance invested approximately **\$4.03 million** in maintenance services and capital improvement projects across the Territory's educational facilities. These investments were strategically prioritized to address critical health and safety concerns, deferred maintenance, infrastructure modernization, and routine facility maintenance necessary to support school operations and improve the overall learning environment.

St. Croix District

The **St. Croix District** spent approximately **\$3,017,742.22** in facility investments across schools, support facilities, and administrative buildings.

Major capital improvement projects included:

- **Educational Complex** – **\$545,860.38** for courtyard and parking lot lighting upgrades, HVAC installations, roof and ceiling repairs, electrical upgrades, landscaping, and other campus improvements.
- **John H. Woodson Junior High School** – **\$537,820.79** for restroom renovations, mold remediation, auditorium lighting replacement, security camera installation, air quality testing, landscaping, and campus maintenance.
- **Claude O. Markoe Elementary School** – **\$522,007.35** for exterior painting, roof pressure washing, termite remediation, playground concrete improvements, security cameras, window screens, and landscaping.
- **Central High School** – **\$336,886.46** for roof repairs, security camera installation, exterior fencing, landscaping, maintenance supplies, and waste management services.
- **Eulalie Rivera PreK-8 School** – **\$249,959.57** for electrical upgrades, playground removal and replacement, concrete improvements, termite remediation, fencing, landscaping, plumbing repairs, and maintenance support.
- **Alfredo Andrews Elementary School** – **\$195,911.25** for playground improvements, front office upgrades, indoor air quality improvements, awning replacement, landscaping, and maintenance repairs.
- **Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School** – **\$177,523.79** for playground improvements, electrical repairs, plumbing upgrades, fencing, landscaping, and campus maintenance.
- **Special Education Facility** – **\$159,919.02** dedicated to indoor air quality improvements and mold remediation.
- **Assistant Commissioner's Office** – **\$147,328.92** for roof repairs, mold remediation, and indoor air quality improvements.
- Additional investments supported Arthur Richards, Juanita Gardine, Ricardo Richards, Lew Muckle, Adult Education, Alternative Education, the Curriculum Center, and the

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School Lunch Warehouse through landscaping, fencing, plumbing, preventative maintenance, pest control, maintenance supplies, and other facility improvements.

In addition to these capital investments, the District continued to fund recurring preventative maintenance services, including landscaping, pest control, waste removal, janitorial services, HVAC maintenance, and other routine repairs necessary to maintain safe and operational school facilities.

St. Thomas–St. John District

The **St. Thomas–St. John District** received approximately **\$1,009,522.41** in maintenance and capital improvement funding to improve educational facilities throughout both islands.

Major investments included:

- **Lockhart K-8 School** – **\$105,275.15** for deep cleaning, modular improvements, landscaping, maintenance supplies, and campus enhancements.
- **Yvonne E. Milliner-Bowsky Elementary School** – **\$103,253.88** for restroom renovations, cafeteria improvements, HVAC repairs, electrical work, deep cleaning, landscaping, mold assessments, and preventative maintenance.
- **Eudora Kean High School** – **\$101,461.82** for HVAC improvements, smoke remediation, electrical repairs, quarterly cleaning services, landscaping, and maintenance.
- **Joseph Sibilly Elementary School** – **\$96,241.00** for roof repairs, HVAC repairs, janitorial services, landscaping, and campus maintenance.
- **School Lunch Warehouse** – **\$87,700.00** for structural repairs and electrical upgrades supporting food service operations.
- **Charlotte Amalie High School** – **\$85,063.51** for janitorial services, HVAC repairs, landscaping, drain cleaning, mold assessments, maintenance supplies, and preventative maintenance.
- **Edith Williams Alternative Academy** – **\$68,110.00** for roof repairs, deep cleaning, landscaping, and pest control services.
- **Education Skill Center** – **\$64,806.00** for roof coating, power washing, landscaping, and deep cleaning.
- **Joseph Gomez Elementary School** – **\$62,299.55** for electrical repairs, deep cleaning, landscaping, HVAC repairs, mold assessments, and preventative maintenance.
- **Julius E. Sprauve School (St. John)** – **\$58,128.39** for roof repairs, electrical upgrades, generator maintenance, quarterly cleaning, landscaping, maintenance supplies, and waste removal.
- **Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School** – **\$53,155.07** for mold remediation, deep cleaning, window screen installation, HVAC supplies, landscaping, and pest control.
- Additional improvements were completed at Ulla F. Muller Elementary School, Jane E. Tuitt Elementary School, E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary School, Guy H. Benjamin School (St. John), the Education Main Complex, the Curriculum Center, and the Leonard Dober

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administrative offices through roof repairs, electrical improvements, deep cleaning, landscaping, pest control, maintenance supplies, and ongoing preventative maintenance.

Throughout the District, BSCM continued to provide mandatory recurring maintenance services, including pest control, landscaping, HVAC maintenance, janitorial services, deep cleaning, waste removal, electrical repairs, plumbing maintenance, and preventative facility inspections to ensure schools remained safe, healthy, and operational for students and staff.

Collectively, these Fiscal Year 2026 investments reflect the Bureau's commitment to balancing emergency repairs, preventative maintenance, and long-term capital improvements while addressing decades of deferred maintenance across the Virgin Islands public school system. These projects have enhanced the safety, reliability, functionality, and longevity of educational facilities and have been instrumental in preparing schools for the 2026–2027 academic year. These investments are detailed in **Attachment B**.

Summer Maintenance Initiative

While the Bureau continued to perform routine maintenance and emergency repairs throughout Fiscal Year 2026, the annual Summer Maintenance Initiative officially began immediately following the close of the 2025–2026 academic year. Although approximately **\$2.1 million** in appropriated school readiness funding had not yet become available, BSCM immediately focused on preventive maintenance and other priority projects to prepare schools for the opening of the 2026–2027 academic year.

To maximize available resources, BSCM partnered with the **Virgin Islands Department of Labor Summer Youth Employment Program** and the **Virgin Islands Department of Education School Lunch Program**. These partnerships expanded the Bureau's workforce while providing meaningful employment opportunities for Virgin Islands youth.

To date, BSCM has completed or initiated the following Summer Maintenance and School Readiness activities throughout the St. Thomas–St. John and St. Croix Districts:

ST.THOMAS/ST.JOHN DISTRICT

School/Facility	Summer Maintenance Activity	Status
Eudora Kean High School	Interior and exterior painting, pressure washing, cleaning and servicing air conditioning units, general maintenance, campus beautification, and preventive maintenance.	Completed
Julius Sprauve(St. John School)	Interior and exterior painting, pressure washing, air conditioning maintenance, campus beautification, and general maintenance.	Completed

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Joseph Gomez Elementary School	Painting, pressure washing, HVAC cleaning, preventive maintenance, and campus beautification.	Completed
Yvonne E. Milliner-Bowsky Elementary School	Painting, pressure washing, HVAC maintenance, preventive maintenance, and general campus improvements.	Completed
Edith Williams Alternative Academy	Painting, pressure washing, preventive maintenance, HVAC cleaning, and campus beautification.	Completed
Joseph Sibilly Elementary School	Painting, pressure washing, HVAC maintenance, preventive maintenance, and general repairs.	Completed
Sibilly Monroe Annex	Painting, pressure washing, HVAC maintenance, campus beautification, and preventive maintenance.	Completed
Bertha C. Boschulte Jr. High	Installation of fire extinguishers as part of ongoing life safety improvements. Work is continuing.	Completed
Charlotte Amalie High School	Replacement and painting of exterior decks, classroom painting, floor repairs, and additional facility improvements performed throughout the summer.	In Progress/ On going
District-Wide	Electrical inspections at all schools, including replacement of defective lighting, lamps, ballasts, and other electrical deficiencies to ensure classrooms are fully operational for the start of school.	In Progress/ On going

ST. CROIX DISTRICT

School/Facility	Summer Maintenance Activity	Status
Claude O Markoe	Interior and exterior painting, pressure washing, general cleaning, preventive maintenance, and campus beautification.	Completed
Pearl B. Larsen	Painting, pressure washing, preventive maintenance, general cleaning, and campus beautification.	Completed
Juanita Gardine Prek-8	Painting, pressure washing, preventive maintenance, general cleaning, and campus beautification.	Completed

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St. Croix Educational Complex	Assisted MCN Build with the relocation of furniture and equipment to support ongoing construction activities. BSCM crews are completing restroom renovations, which are approximately 95% complete.	95%Completed
CTEC	Restroom renovations performed by BSCM's in-house maintenance team are approximately 85% complete.	85% Completed
Arthur Richards K-8	BSCM hosted participants in the Department of Labor Summer Youth Employment Program and VIDE summer Program for a tour of the new school to expose students to modern educational facilities and the Bureau's role in maintaining them.	Completed
Alfredo Andrews	Work will begin July 12, 2026, includes painting, pressure washing, preventive maintenance, and campus improvements.	Will begin July 12, 2026
St. Croix Central High School	Work will begin July 12, 2026, includes painting, pressure washing, preventive maintenance, and general facility improvements in preparation for the new school year.	Will begin July 12, 2026

School Readiness Initiative

With the recent availability of the appropriated school readiness funds, the Bureau has transitioned from routine summer maintenance activities to major capital improvement projects. Purchase orders have been issued, Notices to Proceed have been executed, and contractors have mobilized to begin work throughout both school districts.

Of the **\$2.1 million** appropriated for school readiness, approximately **\$1.05 million** has been allocated to each district. Based on facility assessments, school administrator input, and the most critical operational needs, BSCM prioritized projects that will have the greatest impact on school readiness while addressing deferred maintenance and improving the safety and functionality of educational facilities.

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St. Thomas/St. John District

Summer capital improvement projects in the St. Thomas–St. John District include roof repairs, modular classroom renovations, HVAC improvements, flooring replacements, and deep-cleaning services to improve indoor air quality and enhance learning environments.

Key projects include:

- Roof repairs at **Ulla F. Muller Elementary School**;
- Flooring renovations in modular classrooms at **Julius E. Sprauve School, Lockhart K-8 School, and Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School**; and
- Continued deep-cleaning services at **Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School** while permanent ventilation and building envelope improvements are being completed

St. Croix District

In the St. Croix District, BSCM has prioritized projects that support school readiness through restroom renovations, roof repairs, HVAC upgrades, cafeteria improvements, music room enhancements, playground and campus safety improvements, and deep-cleaning services.

Major projects include:

- Restroom renovations at **Pearl B. Larsen PreK-8 School, Alfredo Andrews Elementary School, and Lew Muckle Elementary School**;
- Cafeteria improvements at **Claude O. Markoe Elementary School**;
- Roof repairs at the **Adult Education Facility, Ricardo Richards Elementary School, and Eulalie Rivera PreK-8 School**;
- Campus safety improvements at **Juanita Gardine PreK-8 School**, including the replacement of industrial ceiling fans, demolition of an unsafe walkway, and removal of aging playground equipment; and
- Music room improvements at **Central High School** to provide students with a safer and more functional instructional space.

These projects are designed to improve the safety, functionality, and overall condition of educational facilities while minimizing disruptions to classroom instruction by completing as much work as possible during the summer recess.

Although the Bureau received the school readiness funding later than anticipated, resulting in a compressed construction schedule, BSCM is working closely with contractors, school administrators, and project management teams to accelerate project completion. Our goal is to ensure that the identified work is substantially completed—or that appropriate mitigation measures are in place—prior to the opening of the 2026–2027 academic year.

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A complete listing of the Fiscal Year 2026 School Readiness Capital Improvement Projects is provided in **Attachment A**.

Status of Ongoing Projects

As of the date of this testimony, BSCM continues to actively monitor and manage school readiness projects across the St. Croix and St. Thomas–St. John Districts. While many summer maintenance activities have been completed, contractor-led capital improvement projects remain underway and are progressing in accordance with established project schedules.

The Bureau's highest priority is ensuring that all instructional spaces are safe, functional, and ready for students and staff at the start of the 2026–2027 academic year. To achieve this, BSCM conducts regular site inspections, coordinates closely with contractors and school administrators, and monitors project schedules to promptly address any issues that may affect school readiness.

Recognizing that certain large-scale capital improvement projects may extend beyond the first day of school, the Bureau has developed phased construction schedules to minimize disruptions to classroom instruction. Projects that cannot be completed before the opening of school will be carefully managed to ensure that construction activities do not compromise the safety of students, faculty, staff, or daily school operations.

BSCM remains committed to completing all identified school readiness projects as expeditiously as possible while maintaining the highest standards of safety, quality, and fiscal responsibility.

Continued Efforts

While school readiness remains the Bureau's immediate priority, BSCM's mission extends well beyond the opening of the academic year. The Bureau remains committed to improving the condition of educational facilities through a balanced approach that emphasizes preventive maintenance, strategic capital improvements, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Throughout the year, BSCM will continue to address deferred maintenance, respond to emergency facility needs, and implement projects that improve the safety, reliability, and functionality of school buildings across the Territory. By prioritizing projects based on facility condition assessments, health and safety needs, and operational requirements, the Bureau is working to maximize the impact of available funding while extending the useful life of the Territory's educational infrastructure.

The Bureau also remains committed to strengthening its preventive maintenance program. Routine inspections, scheduled maintenance, and timely repairs are essential to preserving school facilities, reducing costly emergency repairs, and protecting the Government's investment in public infrastructure.

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Although challenges such as aging facilities, rising construction costs, procurement timelines, and decades of deferred maintenance continue to impact the Bureau's work, BSCM remains focused on continuous improvement. Through collaboration with the Department of Education, contractors, and other government partners, we will continue advancing projects that provide safe, healthy, and functional learning environments for every student, educator, and employee throughout the Virgin Islands public school system.

As we move forward, the Bureau remains committed to transparency, accountability, and the responsible management of public funds while delivering projects that support student success and enhance the overall educational experience.

Challenges and Next Step

Like many public agencies responsible for maintaining aging infrastructure, the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance continues to face challenges that impact the delivery of maintenance services and capital improvement projects. These challenges include decades of deferred maintenance, aging school facilities, procurement timelines, contractor availability, rising construction costs, long lead times for specialized materials and equipment, and the timely availability of appropriated funding.

Another significant challenge is the limited window available to complete major maintenance and capital improvement projects during the summer months. Many school facilities continue to host summer school, youth enrichment programs, athletic activities, and community events, reducing the amount of uninterrupted time available to perform large-scale construction and maintenance activities before the start of the academic year. As a result, the Bureau must carefully coordinate work schedules to balance school readiness with the continued use of educational facilities throughout the summer.

Despite these challenges, BSCM remains committed to delivering quality projects while ensuring that schools remain safe, functional, and operational. To mitigate these challenges, the Bureau continues to strengthen project planning, improve coordination with school administrators and contractors, prioritize projects based on health and safety needs, and maximize the use of in-house maintenance personnel whenever practical.

Looking ahead, BSCM will continue expanding its preventive maintenance program to reduce emergency repairs, extend the useful life of educational facilities, and improve the overall condition of school infrastructure. The Bureau will also continue monitoring ongoing school readiness projects, ensuring contractor accountability, and working collaboratively with the Department of Education, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Virgin Islands Legislature to secure the resources necessary to address the Territory's long-term facility needs.

School readiness does not end on the first day of classes. It is a year-round commitment that requires continuous maintenance, strategic capital investment, and strong partnerships. BSCM

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remains dedicated to protecting the Government's investment in public school facilities while providing safe, healthy, and functional learning environments for every student, educator, and employee throughout the Virgin Islands.

Conclusion

In closing, the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance remains steadfast in its commitment to providing safe, healthy, and functional learning environments for every student, educator, and employee throughout the Virgin Islands public school system.

School readiness is not a seasonal effort—it is a year-round commitment. From routine maintenance and emergency repairs to major capital improvement projects, the Bureau works every day to preserve our educational facilities, address deferred maintenance, and ensure that our schools remain safe and operational.

While challenges such as aging infrastructure, procurement timelines, rising construction costs, and limited resources continue to impact our work, the progress outlined in today's testimony demonstrates what can be accomplished through planning, collaboration, and the dedication of our employees and partners. We remain committed to maximizing every dollar entrusted to the Bureau and ensuring that public funds are invested responsibly to improve educational facilities across the Territory.

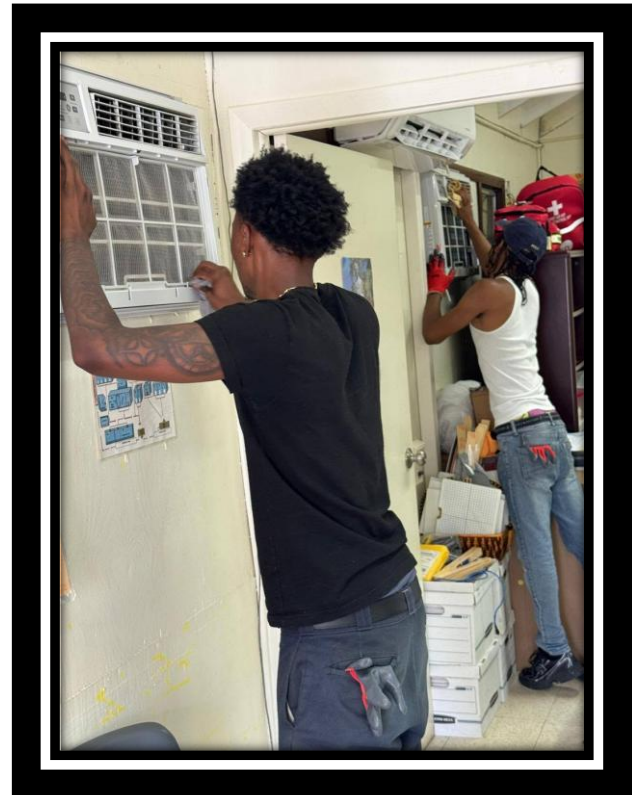
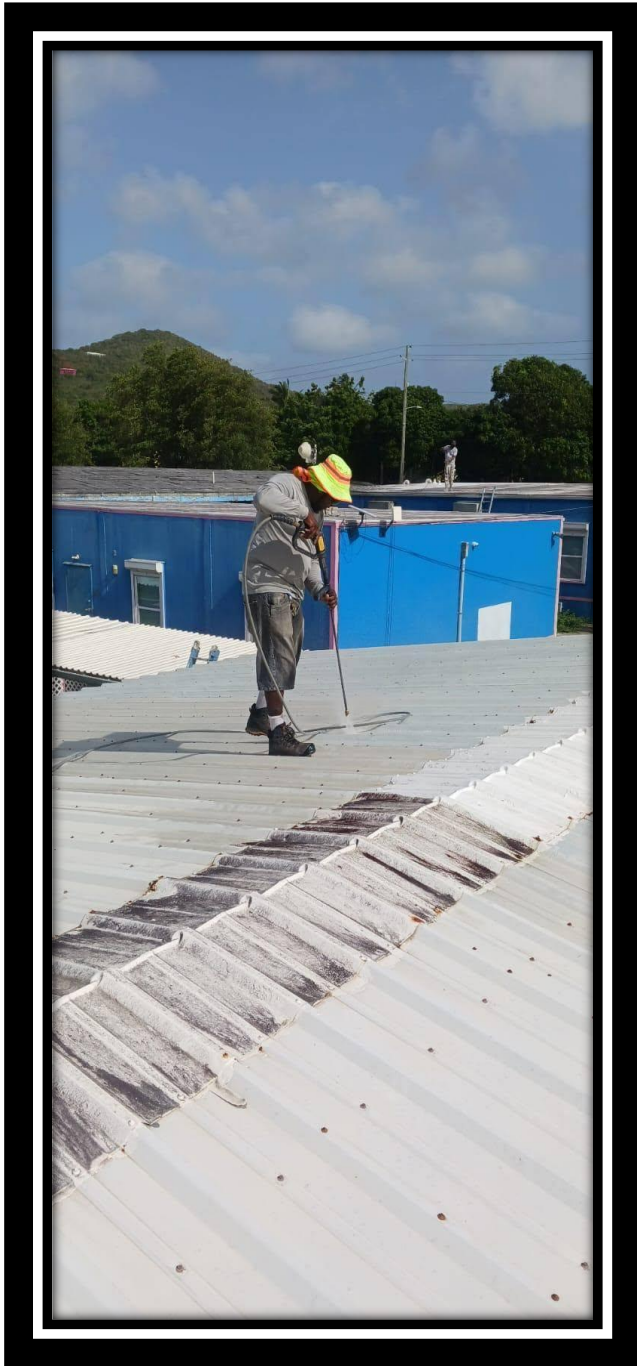
I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Virgin Islands Legislature for its continued support of the Bureau's mission. I also thank the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education School Lunch Program, our contractors, school administrators, and our dedicated BSCM employees whose hard work and professionalism make these accomplishments possible.

On behalf of the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance, thank you for the opportunity to provide this update on our school readiness efforts. We appreciate the Committee's continued partnership and support as we work to strengthen educational facilities for the benefit of our students, educators, and the people of the Virgin Islands.

Thank you, Chairman Violet, Vice Chairman Lewis, and members of the Committee. This concludes my testimony. My team and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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APPENDIX A. SCHOOL FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS PHOTOS



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