

## **Testimony of John “JG” Chirapurath**

October 10, 2026

*Submitted to the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands in support of the bill honoring and commending Rashida A. Hodge*

Honorable Chair, members of the Committee, other Senators present, and the listening and viewing audience:

My name is John “JG” Chirapurath, and I am a senior technology executive. It is my honor to support this bill.

I spent many years at Microsoft helping build and scale its cloud platform, Azure, and most recently led DataPelago, a data company NetApp acquired this year. I worked alongside Rashida at Microsoft after she joined the company in 2021.

She got there the long way, starting at Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas.

Rashida joined Microsoft to help customers get value from Azure and its fast-growing data and AI business. In cloud computing, selling the technology is only the beginning. A cloud platform earns most of its money as customers use it, and a customer who cannot make it work is revenue that never arrives. She went on to lead customer success for Azure Data and AI worldwide, serving many of the world’s largest organizations.

This year Azure passed \$100 billion in annual revenue for the first time, more than twenty times what the entire Virgin Islands economy produces in a year. I know that business from the inside. Building it was the easier job.

Then Microsoft gave her one of the biggest jobs of the AI era. Today, as a Corporate Vice President, she leads AI Business Solutions, helping customers put Microsoft 365, Copilot, and the new generation of AI agents to work. Microsoft gives jobs like that to the people it trusts with its future.

I have worked with hundreds of senior executives. Rashida is among the few who can hold their own with engineers and chief executives in the same afternoon. She understands the technology and knows what it takes to make it pay. She also serves on the boards of Regal Rexnord, a publicly traded global industrial company, and Sonatype, a software supply chain company.

Customer success is the hardest job in technology to fake. When the technology fails, customers call the person who promised it would work, and Rashida has spent her career taking those calls.

At IBM she was part of the team that turned Watson, the computer that won Jeopardy!, into one of the first commercial AI businesses, nearly a decade before ChatGPT. An IBM client nicknamed her “the Superhero of IBM Watson AI” because she kept advocating for them. Companies everywhere now want AI to pay off, and Rashida has been working on exactly that since 2013.

I have watched her in rooms with some of the most senior leaders in our industry. She is sure of herself without needing anyone to notice, and she brings St. Thomas into every one of them.

Rashida also endowed a \$1 million scholarship with the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands. It sends Virgin Islands public high school graduates to her alma mater, North Carolina State University, with tuition, fees, and housing covered. She built mentorship into it, because access alone does not get a young person through.

Rashida signs her emails with one line: “Nothing is too complicated that it cannot be simplified by hard work.” It is the most accurate email signature I know.

Young people across the Virgin Islands should hear from their own Legislature that someone who sat in classrooms like theirs now helps decide how the most important technology of our time reaches the world. I urge you to pass this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

John “JG” Chirapurath