

September 3, 2025

Senator Avery L. Lewis  
Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection  
Legislature of the Virgin Islands  
Capitol Building, Charlotte Amalie  
P.O. Box 1690  
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

**RE: Bill No. 36-0102**

Dear Senate Chairman Lewis & Members of the 36th Legislature,

Good morning. I am deeply honored to testify before you today regarding Bill No. 36-3012. My name is Donald Stevens, and I am the Managing Member and Co-Founder of CAT5 Builders, a company my wife and I established in St. Croix in May 2021. Two years ago, I stood in this conference room before the 35th Legislature, requesting a zoning variance to operate our business in a commercial warehouse on Prince Street in Frederiksted, which was zoned residential. Thank you to those Members present at that time who granted the approval. I am proud to share our progress and the critical importance of Bill No. 36-3012.

I hold a degree in Architecture from Lawrence Technological University 1992 and have over 33 years of experience designing, building, and manufacturing building components for residential and commercial projects. My previous company manufactured components for major hotel chains, including Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt, across the mid-Atlantic region, using much of the same equipment now at our Frederiksted facility. I have also led affordable housing and school construction projects in Haiti and Sri Lanka, bringing innovative building solutions to island nations. When my wife and I first visited St. Croix in 2015, we observed that 70% of construction here relies on traditional, labor-intensive methods like stacking cement blocks and pouring concrete, which are both costly and time-consuming.

CAT5 Builders was founded with four core objectives:

1. Manufacture highly weather-resistant and cost-effective building systems in St. Croix.
2. Train a local workforce in advanced building technology.
3. Create jobs in our community.
4. Support the US Virgin Islands through sustainable development.

I am proud to report success in all four areas. Our Frederiksted facility produces prefabricated walls, floor, and roof trusses (Components) that are hurricane-, earthquake-, fire-, termite-, mold-, and mildew-resistant, as well as environmentally friendly. We have trained local workers, created jobs, and contributed to community for-profit and non-profits projects, including the ongoing construction of a two-story, 35,000 square foot, professional office building at the former H&H Tire & Battery site, which burned down nine years ago. This CAT5 project uses structural building components manufactured at our facility in Frederiksted, a direct result of the zoning variance granted by the 35th Legislature, which enabled the Owner to avoid importing a pre-engineered metal building manufactured in Florida that created significant savings to him but also kept some of the economic benefits here in our community.

As we are all aware, the rising costs of skilled labor and building materials continue to plague the US Virgin Islands, particularly in providing affordable housing. Traditional methods, relying solely on cement blocks and reinforced concrete, are too expensive, labor-intensive, and slow to meet our Territory's urgent needs. Bill No. 36-3012 confronts this crisis head-on by:

1. Incentivizing Local Manufacturing: This Bill will spur competing building component manufacturers to invest robustly in our economy and workforce, fostering a dynamic local industry that reduces reliance on costly imports.
2. Mandating Local Sourcing: This Bill will hold builders, developers, and contractors accountable for prioritizing U.S. Virgin Islands materials and components over foreign alternatives, ensuring economic benefits remain in our communities, as we successfully demonstrated by the H&H project and are other projects.

While CAT5 Builders wholeheartedly supports this legislation, we recognize it will heighten competition. We embrace this challenge, confident in our ability to compete fairly. The housing crisis is too vast for one company alone—CAT5 cannot meet the Territory's needs single-handedly. We welcome other manufacturers to join us in investing in our communities, collectively tackling this critical challenge.

The Virgin Islands Housing Authority declares, "*We have a moral responsibility to improve the living conditions of the families within our reach.*" This is a mandate that all of us should share—CAT5 Builders, this Legislature, and every stakeholder in our construction sector. By passing Bill No. 36-3012, you will unleash a surge of innovation, create enduring jobs, and deliver affordable, resilient housing that withstands our region's environmental challenges.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your unwavering support of CAT5 Builders and the other companies that are currently manufacturing components and building materials here in our Territory. I stand ready to provide further details or answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Donald A. Stevens

Managing Member & Co-Founder

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