

**TESTIMONY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
PATRICIA L. PRYOR, ESQ.
THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC
SAFETY
JUNE 4, 2026**

Good morning, Chairman Clifford Joseph, Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety members, bill sponsor Senator Avery Lewis, other Senators, Legislative staff, and the listening and viewing audiences. I am Patricia Lynn Pryor, Director of the White Collar Crime and Public Corruption Unit for the Virgin Islands Department of Justice, and it is my honor and privilege to appear before you today.

The Department of Justice appreciates the opportunity to review and provide comments on Bill No. 36-0139. Although the stated purpose of Bill No. 36-0139 is to amend title 31 of the Virgin Islands Code, chapters 20 and 21, to assess civil liability for destruction of or damage to government property through willful or negligent acts, the Department of Justice believes this measure is duplicative and, therefore, unnecessary. The Virgin Islands Code already allows for causes of action and remedies for both negligent and intentional destruction of government property, including the enforcement of internal departmental policies and procedures and the filing of civil actions, if needed.

For example, the penalties and financial responsibility for misconduct and physical damage to any of the Government's motor vehicles are currently codified in title 31 of the Code, chapter 20, section 167. Additionally, civil actions are another available remedy to recover damages for damage to or destruction of government property. Civil actions for damage to or destruction of real or personal property are governed under title 5 of the Virgin Islands Code.

Finally, Departments and Agencies within the Government of the Virgin Islands should have formal policies regarding the use and misuse of government property, including vehicles. By allowing individual Departments and Agencies the autonomy to resolve these matters in-house, claims can be resolved quicker and more efficiently, which can result in reduced costs. Matters that cannot be resolved internally should be escalated through the remaining available avenues.

Although Bill No. 36-0139 addresses a legitimate concern, it is not necessary. Duplicative laws should be avoided as they are an inefficient use of resources that can lead to significant problems, including inconsistency in the law and, as a result, arbitrary enforcement.

I thank the Committee for allowing the Department of Justice to testify on Bill No. 36-0139. This concludes my formal remarks. I welcome any questions you may have.