



United States Virgin Islands

Bureau of Corrections

COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC SAFETY
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Presented By :
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DIRECTOR WYNNIE TESTAMARK
VIRGIN ISLANDS BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
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Good morning, Chairman Clifford A. Joseph, Sr., Vice-Chairman Ray Fonseca, esteemed Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, Senator Gittens, Senator Lewis, Senator Bolques, Senator DeGraff, and Senator Johnson, distinguished Members of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, legislative staff, and all those joining us in person and virtually via YouTube and Facebook.

My name is Wynn Timer Testamark, and I have the honor and privilege of serving as the Director of the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections. Today, I appear before you with deep respect and a renewed sense of purpose to provide testimony for the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the operations of the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections, including the status of the federal consent decrees, payments to the independent monitoring team, staffing and workforce development, institutional safety, healthcare, sanitation, fire safety, and ongoing capital and capital improvement projects.

The Bureau remains committed to fulfilling its mission of operating safe, secure, humane, and constitutionally compliant correctional facilities while protecting the public and those entrusted to our care. Over the past several years, the Bureau has made measurable progress toward modernizing correctional operations, strengthening institutional security, improving healthcare delivery, and positioning the Territory for the successful conclusion of decades of federal oversight.

Federal Consent Decree Status

The Virgin Islands Department of Justice serves as lead counsel for both the St. Croix and St. Thomas Settlement Agreements. In a coordinated effort to advance toward resolution, the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Corrections have engaged Butler Snow, LLC, a nationally recognized law firm with specialized expertise in correctional systems litigation and consent decree termination strategies. Working under the supervision of the Department of Justice, the firm provides strategic legal guidance and utilizes a structured approach to assess sustained compliance and position the Territory for the eventual dismissal of federal oversight.

The Bureau is pleased to report significant progress under both settlement agreements.

Following more than forty years of federal oversight, the District Court of the Virgin Islands granted the Territory's joint motion to terminate the medical and dental care provisions of the St. Croix Settlement Agreement after the filing of a joint declaration in July 2025 documenting sustained constitutional compliance.

During the November 20, 2025, status hearing, the Honorable Judge Wilma A. Lewis recognized the Bureau's sustained compliance with constitutional medical and dental care standards, noting that longstanding deficiencies had been replaced by stable, modern, and constitutionally compliant healthcare systems. Court-appointed monitors similarly reported continued progress across additional operational areas.

In the St. Thomas Settlement Agreement, a status conference was held before Chief Judge Robert A. Molloy on May 14, 2026. The Court continues to evaluate the Bureau's compliance efforts while monitoring sustained performance in the remaining areas of the agreement.

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Collectively, these developments represent an important transition from achieving compliance to sustaining compliance. The Bureau remains committed to maintaining constitutional operations while working collaboratively with the Department of Justice, Butler Snow, LLC, and the independent monitoring team toward the successful conclusion of both settlement agreements.

Independent Monitoring Team

The Bureau continues to cooperate fully with the Court-appointed independent monitoring team. Monitors conduct regular site visits, review policies and procedures, inspect institutional operations, interview staff and incarcerated individuals, and assess compliance with the settlement agreements.

Payments to the independent monitoring team continue in accordance with the settlement agreements and Court directives. The Bureau remains committed to supporting the monitoring process as an essential component of demonstrating sustained compliance and achieving the eventual termination of federal oversight.

Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention

Correctional professionals remain the Bureau's greatest asset.

Currently, the Bureau employs:

- **St. Thomas:** 24 Correctional Officers and 2 Supervisors, in addition to a Warden and Chief Correction Officer. – Total 28 Sworn Staff
- **St. Croix:** 38 Correctional Officers and 2 Supervisors, in addition to a Warden, Assistant Warden, and Chief Correction Officer. – Total 43 Sworn Staff

Despite persistent staffing challenges affecting correctional agencies nationwide, these dedicated men and women continue to perform their duties with professionalism, dedication, and resilience.

The Bureau continues to prioritize workforce development through expanded recruitment initiatives, including radio advertisements, career fairs, continuous vacancy announcements, examination waivers for qualified applicants where authorized, and close collaboration with the Division of Personnel to streamline hiring. These efforts have contributed to increased correctional recruit applications and the onboarding of new correctional officers across both districts.

The Bureau also continues to invest in employee development through annual in-service training, leadership development, emergency preparedness, contraband interdiction, and professional certification programs to ensure staff remain prepared to meet evolving correctional challenges.

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Staff Safety, Security, and Institutional Operations

Maintaining a safe and secure environment for correctional staff, incarcerated individuals, and visitors remains one of the Bureau's highest priorities. Recognizing the increasing sophistication of contraband smuggling methods nationwide, the Bureau has implemented a comprehensive contraband interdiction strategy that includes established contraband policies, enhanced search procedures, annual officer training, intelligence gathering, and specialized K-9 detection capabilities.

The Bureau has invested significantly in strengthening institutional security through the installation and expansion of advanced surveillance camera systems, high-definition central control monitoring, X-ray contraband detection equipment, electronic Key Watcher accountability systems, perimeter fencing improvements, solar-powered security lighting, Live View remote surveillance cameras, and backup power systems that ensure uninterrupted security operations during emergencies. The Bureau also modernized inmate classification practices, strengthened key control and evidence management procedures, and staff were trained in the use of body-worn camera technology to further enhance accountability and officer safety. Note that in FY27, we will begin the pilot phase of the body worn camera technology.

The Bureau continues to invest in equipping staff with the vehicles, equipment, technology, and operational resources needed to perform their duties safely and effectively. Professional development remains a cornerstone of institutional safety through annual security training, firearms qualifications, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, leadership development, K-9 certification, key control, inmate classification, emergency preparedness, correctional healthcare, legal updates, and supervisory training.

Officer Speedy, the Bureau's certified narcotics detection canine, plays an essential role in identifying illegal drugs and controlled substances entering Bureau facilities. Complementing those efforts is Officer Blondie, an electronics detection canine specially trained to locate hidden cellular telephones, electronic communication devices, electronic storage media, and related contraband. The Bureau also expanded its specialized K-9 program with additional trained handlers to further strengthen contraband detection and institutional security.

These investments have been complemented by continued modernization of operational systems, including computerized maintenance management, expanded video technology for operational efficiency, and strengthened performance management and accountability systems. Together, these specialized resources, modern technologies, and highly trained personnel reflect the Bureau's commitment to adopting best practices in corrections, proactively addressing emerging threats, and maintaining a safe, secure, and professional correctional environment for staff, incarcerated individuals, and visitors.

Healthcare and Inmate Services

The Bureau remains committed to meeting its constitutional obligation to provide quality healthcare services while maintaining responsible stewardship of public resources through enhanced oversight, strengthened contract management, and continuous quality improvement. In addition, the Bureau is dedicated to providing comprehensive rehabilitative and re-entry

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services, including quality medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare, case management services, educational opportunities, vocational training, and evidence-based re-entry programming. These services are designed to address the individual needs of those in custody, support personal growth and accountability, and prepare individuals for successful reintegration into the community.

Over the past several years, the Bureau has significantly modernized correctional healthcare through the implementation of electronic medical records, telemedicine and telepsychiatry services, expanded onsite dental care, enhanced contract oversight, and strengthened clinical staffing. As the only correctional system in the Caribbean to implement this comprehensive, technology-driven correctional healthcare model, the Bureau has established a regional benchmark for innovation and quality of care. The Bureau has expanded behavioral health services through dedicated mental health housing and treatment units, increased access to psychiatric and psychological care, crisis intervention services, medication management, substance abuse treatment, trauma-informed counseling, anger management, conflict resolution, independent living skills, and other evidence-based therapeutic programming. The Bureau has also successfully transferred individuals requiring higher levels of psychiatric care to specialized treatment facilities when clinically appropriate and established preventive healthcare initiatives, including mammography services for female inmates.

The Bureau continues to invest significant resources to ensure that constitutionally adequate healthcare remains available to every individual in its custody. In recent years, the Bureau has invested more than \$1M annually in inpatient and outpatient medical care to include medical supplies while continuing to provide comprehensive medical, dental, and mental health services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau successfully implemented comprehensive infection control measures, became a CDC-authorized provider of both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, maintained vaccine availability for inmates and staff, and successfully managed the pandemic without any inmate requiring hospitalization due to COVID-19 after the initial outbreak period.

The recent termination of the medical and dental provisions of the St. Croix Settlement Agreement reflects the Bureau's sustained compliance with constitutional healthcare standards and the significant progress made in modernizing healthcare delivery within its institutions.

As of July 2026, the Bureau houses 184 inmates locally, including 79 inmates at the Criminal Justice Complex (10 sentenced and 69 detainees) and 105 inmates at the John A. Bell Adult Correctional Facility (54 sentenced and 51 detainees). Of those housed locally, 170 are male and 14 are female.

In addition, the Bureau houses 169 inmates in contracted correctional facilities off-island, including 33 inmates in Virginia Department of Corrections and 136 inmates in CoreCivic Correctional Facilities.

In total, the Bureau is responsible for 353 individuals in its custody. Regardless of housing location, the Bureau remains responsible for ensuring that every individual receives appropriate housing, nutrition, healthcare, transportation, security, and rehabilitative services at the Territory's expense.

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Later this year, Bureau leadership intends to conduct oversight visits to the contracted correctional facilities in Virginia and CoreCivic. These visits will include meetings with facility administrators, reviews of inmate records to ensure they remain current and complete, inspections of facility operations, and individual meetings with Virgin Islands inmates to assess their well-being, address concerns, and ensure they continue to receive appropriate care and services. These visits reaffirm the Bureau's commitment to maintaining accountability for every person committed to its custody.

Mental health care remains a critical component of correctional healthcare. Consequently, the Bureau has become one of the Territory's largest providers of correctional behavioral health services. Presently, approximately 40 percent of inmates within Bureau facilities receive some form of mental health treatment. The Bureau operates a dedicated mental health treatment unit staffed by qualified behavioral health professionals and provides comprehensive psychiatric care, counseling, medication management, crisis intervention, and structured day-treatment programming. These services are supported by multidisciplinary case management teams that begin individualized service planning on the first day of incarceration and coordinate treatment, educational programming, vocational training, family engagement, and re-entry preparation throughout an individual's period of confinement. Together, these investments reflect the Bureau's continued commitment to improving health outcomes, reducing recidivism, and ensuring that every individual in its custody receives safe, appropriate, and constitutionally compliant care.

Sanitation and Fire Safety

The Bureau continues to maintain sanitation standards through routine inspections, preventive maintenance, housekeeping protocols, pest control, and environmental health practices that support safe and hygienic living conditions for both staff and inmates.

Fire and life safety remain major priorities. The Bureau is currently working with D&B Engineering to finalize the design of a comprehensive fire alarm and fire suppression system for the John Bell Adult Correctional Facility. This project represents an important investment in emergency preparedness and institutional safety.

Capital Projects and Capital Improvements

The Bureau continues to advance significant infrastructure projects that will improve correctional operations and modernize the Territory's correctional system.

Swan Annex

Working in partnership with the Office of Disaster Recovery, the Bureau completed the architectural design for a new 207-bed correctional facility at the Swan Annex site. The Office of Disaster Recovery now serves as the lead agency responsible for project implementation and construction.

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John Bell Adult Correctional Facility

The Bureau continues to work with Witt O'Brien's and DLR Group on the development of construction drawings for a new perimeter security fence. The design process continues in collaboration with project stakeholders to ensure the final product satisfies operational and security requirements before moving into construction.

Additional improvements include:

- Completion of 100 percent of the new energy-efficient perimeter lighting system.
- Continued collaboration with D&B Engineering on the design of a new fire alarm and fire suppression system.
- Expansion of medical and mental health treatment areas to improve healthcare delivery and inmate services.

These projects strengthen institutional security, improve operational resilience, and enhance the Bureau's ability to provide safe, modern, and constitutionally compliant correctional facilities. The Bureau respectfully recognizes the importance of continued funding support from the Legislature, including the Senate, to ensure that the Territory maintains correctional institutions that meet constitutional standards, protect the safety of staff and individuals in custody, and support effective rehabilitation and re-entry efforts. Sustained investment is essential to addressing critical infrastructure needs, maintaining secure operations, and ensuring the Territory's correctional system remains safe, effective, and constitutionally sound.

Conclusion

The Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections has made measurable progress across every major operational area. The historic termination of the medical and dental provisions of the St. Croix Settlement Agreement, continued advancement under the St. Thomas Settlement Agreement, strengthened recruitment efforts, investments in employee safety and professional development, expanded healthcare oversight, enhanced contraband interdiction capabilities, and ongoing capital improvements all demonstrate the Bureau's commitment to continuous improvement and operational excellence.

While important work remains, the Bureau has transitioned from simply achieving compliance to sustaining compliance. We remain committed to protecting public safety, supporting our dedicated correctional professionals, ensuring the constitutional care of those entrusted to our custody, and working collaboratively with the Legislature, the Department of Justice, the federal courts, and our community partners as we move toward the successful conclusion of federal oversight.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this update. I welcome any questions the Committee may have.