



Virgin Islands Continuum of Care on Homelessness, Inc.

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February 9, 2026

Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, Chair, Committee on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunications
Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building, P.O. Box 1690
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00804

Testimony: VI Continuum of Care Council on Homelessness, Update to the Committee on Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure and Telecommunications

Good day, Honorable Chair Blyden, members of the Committee on Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure and Telecommunications, other members of the 36th Legislature, and the listening and viewing audience. My name is Mr. Dan Derima, and I serve as Chair of the Virgin Islands Continuum of Care on Homelessness (CoC).

The CoC is the federally designated regional planning body under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) responsible for coordinating housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The CoC is a coalition of nonprofit providers, government agencies, faith-based organizations, and individuals with lived experience that oversees the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), implements the Coordinated Entry System (CES), and manages applications for federal CoC funding. These funds are intended to support permanent and transitional housing, rapid re-housing, supportive services, and homelessness prevention.

Current Homelessness and Housing-Instability Trends

The CoC uses HUD's standardized, nationwide definition and methodology to assess homelessness, and HUD relies on this data to inform federal funding decisions and policy priorities affecting the Territory. The most recent Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, conducted on January 24, 2025, identified 304 unsheltered individuals across the Virgin Islands, an increase from 252 individuals in the 2023 PIT Count. The PIT Count represents a single-night snapshot and does not capture individuals who are temporarily staying with others, meaning overall housing instability is likely understated.

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) measures the number and type of beds available to serve individuals experiencing homelessness, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. The most recent HIC, conducted on January 30, 2026, identified 199 beds dedicated to homeless services across the Territory, compared to 92 beds identified in the 2023 HIC. This increase reflects improved inclusion of housing resources that were not fully captured in prior counts, as well as incremental growth in inventory; however, the Territory has experienced the loss of bed capacity following the closure of Liberty Place due to fire damage and 10,000 Helpers after hurricane impacts.

HUD requires a full unsheltered PIT Count every other year; 2025 was a PIT year, 2026 is a HIC year, and the next PIT Count will occur in 2027. Despite overall growth in reported capacity, available beds remain insufficient relative to documented need. Observations indicate increased visibility of unsheltered individuals across the Territory, including displacement following site clearing of the former Cancryn School on St. Thomas. Of particular concern are reports of unsheltered households with minor children. Homelessness is not illegal, and while individuals may be offered assistance, they retain the right to refuse services.



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Point-in-Time (PIT) Count – Unsheltered Individuals, January 24, 2025

Island	Unsheltered Individuals
St. Thomas	185
St. Croix	98
St. John	21
Territory Total	304

Housing Inventory Count (HIC) – January 30, 2026

Program Type	Provider / Program	Location	Beds	People Served	Notes
Emergency Shelter	Catholic Charities – Bethlehem Shelter	St. Thomas	40	40	20 men, 19 women, 1 child
	MTOC – SSVF (Veterans)	Territory-wide	3	3	Men
Transitional Housing	Hearts in Service	St. Thomas	9	7	
	Catholic Charities – St. Teresa of Calcutta	St. Croix	11	9	4 men, 5 women
	Bureau of Corrections – Tiny Homes	St. Croix	2	0	Vacant, planning in progress
	St. Croix Mission Outreach – Genesis House	St. Croix	9	8	Men
	Catholic Charities – Our Lady of Charity	St. John	7	7	Men
	MTOC – Single Room Occupancy (SRO)	St. Thomas	8	5	2 men, 3 women
Victim Service Providers	Family Resource Center	St. Thomas	12	7	
	Women's Coalition	St. Croix	8	6	
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	MTOC – PSH (Scattered Sites)	St. Thomas	4	4	2 men, 2 women
	MTOC – Hilltop (Scattered Sites)	St. Thomas	4	5	
	MTOC – TBRA	Territory-wide	18	24	
	HUD-VASH (VA) – Veterans	Territory-wide	20	20	Scattered sites
Other Permanent Housing	MTOC – SSVF (Veterans), Rapid Rehousing	Territory-wide	35	35	



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Data Pending	Eagle's Nest	St. Croix	Unknown	Unknown	Capacity not reported
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Location	Beds
St. Thomas	77
St. Croix	30
St. John	7
Territory-wide / Scattered Sites	76
Total Identified Beds	190

2. Operational, Financial, and Programmatic Status

Since our appearance before this Committee last year, the CoC has incorporated as a nonprofit and now serves as its own HUD Collaborative Applicant, a role previously administered through the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority. This transition has increased operational flexibility, strengthened accountability, and improved the CoC's ability to respond efficiently to federal requirements and local needs. The CoC currently includes 192 members, meets monthly in an open virtual forum, and welcomes community participation.

The CoC has made steady progress toward HUD compliance. The 2020–2023 CoC Planning Grants were approved for transfer to our organization, applications for the 2024 and 2025 planning funds are pending; and the 2026 planning grant application was submitted on time. Currently, the federally mandated Coordinated Entry System (CES) is not fully implemented. The CES ensures that individuals and families experiencing homelessness are assessed consistently, prioritized by vulnerability, and connected to appropriate housing and services. The CoC is working with HUD Technical Assistance to finalize CES requirements and expects implementation by the end of March. Until compliance is achieved, HUD funding is limited to renewal projects.

The CoC was also awarded \$185,000 through Act No. 8759, appropriated to the Department of Human Services, and is coordinating with DHS to ensure timely access to these funds.

3. Impacts of Federal Policy Shifts and Funding Uncertainty

At the federal level, litigation involving HUD and Continuums of Care followed proposals to eliminate the CoC program structure and shift funding under the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) framework. Although these changes were not implemented, the resulting uncertainty continues to disrupt planning and create instability in the CoC funding environment nationwide. This uncertainty is compounded by recent federal policy changes expanding work requirements across safety-net programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, and ongoing discussions about extending similar requirements to housing assistance. In some states (Illinois, Texas, Ohio), these policies have resulted in individuals losing benefits, raising concern that if applied to HUD programs, vulnerable households could lose critical supports.

At the territorial level, the re-establishment of the Virgin Islands Interagency Council on Homelessness is a positive development, and the CoC is actively engaged in this forum to help align policy, funding, and implementation across agencies.

4. Recommendations for Strengthening Collaboration

To strengthen the Territory's housing-stability system, the CoC recommends expanding participation across



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nonprofit and government partners; ensuring universal use of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to improve coordination, data quality, and accountability; and fully implementing and integrating the Coordinated Entry System (CES) using a “no wrong door” approach. The CoC further recommends integrating CES into the Territory’s broader emergency and crisis-response framework and establishing a centralized access point or hotline, potentially in partnership with United Way. Together, these actions would significantly improve system coordination, efficiency, and outcomes for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

5. SWOT Summary

Consistent with prior testimony, the CoC’s strengths include committed partners, improving system organization, and alignment with national best practices. Weaknesses continue to include limited housing inventory, insufficient supportive housing, and administrative capacity constraints. Opportunities include stronger interagency coordination, expanded HUD funding eligibility upon CES compliance, and improved data integration. Threats include funding volatility, federal policy uncertainty, and unmet behavioral health and housing needs.

Chair Blyden and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. We appreciate your continued partnership as we work to strengthen housing stability across the Virgin Islands and welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

Dan A. Derima

Chair, VI Continuum of Care on Homelessness