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February 9, 2026

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

Testimony: Meeting The Needs of Our Community, Inc., to the Committee on Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, and Telecommunications

Good morning, Chair Blyden, members of the Committee, legislative staff, and members of the public.

I bring you greetings on behalf of the Board of Directors, management, and staff of Meeting The Needs of Our Community, Inc., formerly known as the Methodist Training and Outreach Center. Thank you, Senator Blyden, and members of this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today and to share our observations, concerns, and recommendations related to housing and housing stability in the Virgin Islands.

My name is Dan A. Derima, and I serve as the Executive Director of Meeting The Needs of Our Community (MTOC). I have testified previously before this Committee and appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on issues related to homelessness and housing instability that directly impact our organization and the populations we serve.

A comprehensive overview of current homelessness and housing-instability trends

Housing instability in the Virgin Islands has reached crisis levels. Individuals experiencing homelessness in our community include, but are not limited to, people with mental health disabilities, substance use disorders, unemployment challenges, ineligible veterans, and other compounding factors.

At present, there are insufficient homes, shelters, or government-operated facilities to adequately address the varying needs of this population. The situation has not improved, as no new homeless shelter beds have come online in recent years. Additionally, because no passport is required to enter the Territory, individuals are able to travel freely to the Virgin Islands, further increasing the homeless population and placing additional strain on already limited local resources.

The assessment of the operational, financial, and programmatic status of services

Meeting The Needs of Our Community is a nonprofit organization and, as such, does not have the capacity to provide uninterrupted or comprehensive assistance without collaboration with other nonprofit partners, government agencies, grant funding, and legislative support.

MTOC operates primarily through designated grant funding that serves specific populations, including homeless U.S. veterans and persons living with HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, these grants do not address the full scope of individuals experiencing general housing instability in the Territory.

Currently, MTOC houses three males and five females in our Single Room Occupancy (SRO) facility located at #29 Contant. This is our only housing unit with shared living accommodations, including bathrooms, kitchen, and common living space, while each resident maintains a private bedroom. The SRO consists of two separate buildings—one for males and one for females—and is subsidized by the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. Participation in this transitional housing program requires compliance with HUD eligibility requirements.

In addition, MTOC operates two Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing grants, which collectively house eight individuals who meet the eligibility criteria of being homeless and having a documented disability.

MTOC does not operate emergency housing or shelter services due to the lack of funding and available housing units. However, I want to emphasize that MTOC has the organizational structure, policies, and trained personnel necessary to manage such a facility should funding and physical resources become available.

Your organization's viewpoint on how federal policy shifts

MTOC closely monitors federal policy changes, as the majority of our programs are federally funded. Our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs rely on federal funding. Additionally, our Permanent Supportive Housing and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) grants are funded through the federal Continuum of Care program.

Recent proposed changes by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Continuum of Care program raised significant concerns, particularly potential funding cuts to Permanent Supportive Housing, which would directly impact households and services in the Territory.

In response, a coalition of 20 states, led by New York Attorney General Letitia James, along with organizations such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness, filed suit challenging the proposed changes. In December, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction blocking HUD's

use of the November Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). HUD subsequently rescinded those changes and issued a revised funding opportunity applicable to Fiscal Year 2025 only.

The submission deadline for this funding cycle was February 9, 2026, and I am pleased to report that MTOC submitted all required applications on time. Any future changes in federal funding for Continuum of Care programs will have a direct and immediate impact on services for individuals with disabilities in the Virgin Islands.

Recommendations for strengthening collaboration and coordination

Effective collaboration requires resources. While the implementation of a Coordinated Entry System is a positive step, the absence of sufficient housing and supportive resources limits its effectiveness. Coordination alone, without the capacity to respond meaningfully to identified needs, leaves individuals without viable solutions.

We must ensure that any temporary housing solutions remain temporary and that the Territory prioritizes the development of long-term, permanent housing options. Sustainable solutions require strategic investment, interagency collaboration, and legislative support.

Thank you again, Chair Blyden and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide this testimony. MTOC stands ready to continue working collaboratively with the Legislature, government agencies, and community partners to address homelessness and housing instability in the Virgin Islands.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dan A. Derima', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dan A. Derima
Executive Director
Meeting The Needs of Our Community, Inc.