

4A Kronprindsens Gade  
PO Box 306816  
St. Thomas, USVI 00803  
Phone: (340)714-7782  
Fax: (340)714-7784  
www.mtoc.vi



22 King Street  
Christiansted, St. Croix, VI 00820  
Phone: (340)713-0555  
Fax: (340)713-0556

---

September 26, 2024

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 and Telecommunications**

A pleasant good morning to all. I bring you greetings from the Board of Directors, Management and Staff of Meeting The needs of Our Community, formerly Methodist Training and Outreach Center. Thank you, Senator Blyden, Committee Members, Staff, and the listening audience for the invitation to share our thoughts and concerns. I am Dan Derima, Executive Director of Meeting The needs of Our Community. I testified previously to this committee on September 30, 2024, and I appreciate the opportunity to update this legislative committee on all issues regarding housing and housing stability that impact and are impacted by our organization.

First, MTOC has been in existence since 2001, founded and governed by members of the Methodist Church. The name was changed in 2022, based on the perception that this agency was part of and governed by the Methodist Church itself.

**The current extent of housing instability**

The extent of housing instability is disheartening, the persons affected by this instability varies. These numbers include drifters, ineligible veterans, persons with mental disabilities, substance abuse disorders, unemployment, and other issues. There are no homes, shelters, or government ran facilities to accommodate the various issues. Unfortunately, and oftentimes they are all placed in the same category; **homeless**. These people are living in a place not fit for human habitation, such as abandoned buildings, parks, and our ballfields. Some are generally in unpleasant situations, for example, ex-prisoners recently released, some facing family disputes, or having no family on island. We also have those people faced with eviction for delinquency or non-payments, and overcrowded living conditions. This situation does not speak well of the territory and how they treat their own, the less fortunate constituents.

**The operational and financial status of organizations providing services to persons suffering from housing instability.**

Meeting the Needs of Our Community (MTOC) is a nonprofit entity, and as such we do not have the means to provide uninterrupted assistance without collaborating with other non-profits, government agencies, grants, or this Legislative body. MTOC operates and service those less fortunate through designated grant funds that speaks to a certain demographic (homeless U.S. veterans and persons with HIV/AIDS). Unfortunately, these grants do not cover the number of actual persons in the general housing instability status. MTOC, without the ability to buy or rent a building, is unable to further assist with the housing instability among this population. MTOC currently houses three males and five females in our Single Room Occupancy (SRO) building located at #29 Contant, which is our only housing unit with shared living conditions (bathroom, living room & kitchen) however, they each have their own bedrooms. The SRO has two buildings, one for males and one for females, and is subsidized by the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. Persons must meet the HUD requirements, and it is a temporary home until they become more self-sufficient. MTOC offers no emergency housing opportunities due to the lack of funds and housing units. MTOC has the template and human resources to manage such a facility if it becomes a reality.

**The extent and nature of interaction and collaboration between nonprofits and government agencies, suggestions for improvement**

Interaction and collaboration between Government agencies is in crisis mode, not much is in place to address the issues at hand. There is no protocol to follow and partner agencies are not aware of what grant funding is available and know the limits on the assistance and qualifying factors. The different personalities and degrees of homeless aid needed should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

MTOC is a conduit for the processing of clients in programs under the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health (Frederiksted Health Care on St. Croix & Virgin Islands Department of Health). Again, these programs serve a particular demographic, leaving people in the general housing instability status without an avenue for assistance. Referrals from the Family Resource Center and the Women's Coalition of St. Croix are some of the clients we attempt to assist as best as we can, as much as we can. Women and children services are a much-needed service. It is our belief that agencies should also keep a database of all applicants not served, indicating the services needed. This data collection will serve as statistics to secure additional funding, as most grants require stats as evidence of the need.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats as your organization views the housing environment and your efforts to assist and find solutions.**

MTOC has the template and experienced personnel to manage and ensure applicants meet the requirements to become eligible for the various programs. This includes the intake process, providing the relevant documentation and confirming eligibility. What is lacking is the funding and the facilities to house perspective clients. The lack of funds designated specifically to assist

the homeless remains an issue for MTOC, as we have not had the privilege of receiving funding solely designated to help those persons affected by housing instability. MTOC had an opportunity to purchase a building to minimize this issue, however, we were not approved to purchase or rent under the guidelines of the available program. We find it difficult to secure funding to rent or purchase a building to undertake such a task.

MTOC could reach many of the constituents that we speak of. We see them on our way in and out of the office. These prospects congregate under the bungalow and the sidewalk directly in front of our office. The staff know many of them by name and their shortcomings. We provide feedings monthly with donated resources, provide bags with mini toiletries, juices and water donated by businesses. MTOC serves as the mailing address for many of this population so they can receive mail, packages from relatives, and receive updates from agencies about housing opportunities. Our threats are not harmful threats. There are emotional threats from those homeless individuals that do not fall in the qualified criteria for services provided to the qualified veterans and persons affected by HIV/AIDS, unaware of the necessary requirements and feeling slighted or as though more can be done for them. Again, we do not have the means to assist the people facing housing instability.

Chair Blyden, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for the invitation to provide information and our first-hand experience regarding housing and housing stability in the territory through the lens of Meeting The Needs of Our Community, Inc (MTOC).



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