

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF
STEPHAN ADAMS, VINGN PRESIDENT & CEO
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS AFFAIRS,
AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
April 8, 2026**

Good morning, Honorable Avery L. Lewis, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, Honorable Senators, and the listening and viewing audiences. I am Stephan Adams, President and CEO of viNGN, Inc. Today, I am honored to present to you today.

My statements during this hearing will be brief. viNGN supports the commonsense legislation of Bill 36-0074. Maintaining the integrity of our infrastructure is the top priority for viNGN. Vegetation management is a top priority and significant cost for our Company. Crews and contractors spend a considerable amount of time keeping vegetation away from our infrastructure. This time-consuming work not only diverts attention from core technical tasks, but it also puts our technical workers at risk of accidental electrocution or falling. They are also untrained to determine where private property boundaries exist versus public right of way. This poses liability risk for viNGN. Consequently, viNGN is in favor of this bill as long as our risk is mitigated.

While Bill 36-0074, is well intended but it presents potential risks to our network. This exposure comes from property owners, who are not trained as tree trimmers, accidentally damaging our cable and other infrastructure components by improperly clearing vegetation.

Vegetation removal is a delicate task that we would not want an armature arborist to do. It could become costly for viNGN to repair accidental cuts to our fiber by property owners striving to meet the requirement of this bill.

I am unable to speak to this bill's enforcement proposal. However, I do have a recommendation for this Committee to consider. If property owners are required to clear vegetation from power and utility infrastructure, then licensed and bonded professionals should be required to perform this work. Otherwise, risk and insurance burden are shifted to viNGN in the event of accidental fiber optic cable damage by property owners intending to comply with this legislation. If this bill is enacted as presently authored, the financial burden of compliance would shift to viNGN and the other utilities and away from the property owner who might cause accidental damage to our network.

I encourage this committee to weigh the inherent liability risks associated with this legislation and add safety measures to limit risk to the utilities. It might be more prudent to establish a fund that all stakeholders pay into proportionally to hire professional bonded tree trimmers to keep utility infrastructure clear of vegetation hazards.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your attention. I look forward to answering your questions.

###