Testimony of
Mr. Joseph Todd Donohoo
Governor's Nominee for the
VI Board of Contractors, Trades and Craft for the St. District
Before the Committee on Rules and Judiciary
36th Legislature of the US Virgin Islands
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Good morning, Senator Carla Joseph, Chairwoman of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for the 36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands, members of the Committee, non-Committee members, Legislative Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen in the chamber, and the viewing and listening audience.

My name is Joseph Todd Donohoo Governor's nominee to the Virgin Islands Board of Contractors, Trades and Craft for the St. District. Before I go into the heart of my testimony, I would like to thank the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. and the Honorable Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach for this opportunity and their support as well as this Committee for consideration of my nomination today.

It is a profound honor and an opportunity to give back to the community that has shaped the man I have become. I do not take this nomination lightly. I understand both the responsibility and the privilege that comes with serving on this board.

To provide some background, I came to St. Croix at 14 years old, shortly after Hurricane Hugo, to help my father carry the workload he was under and to support my mother and five sisters. I still remember arriving and crying because of the conditions so many of us were living in. Homes were destroyed. Families were in tents. We stood in line at water trucks with five-gallon buckets just to cook and drink.

Those experiences shaped me. They gave me not only a love for the trade, but a deep understanding of how essential they are — and how important strong codes and standards are to protect our people.

I did not attend school during my eighth-grade year. I worked instead. Later I returned to private school and went straight into ninth grade. Every summer after that, I worked for my father, a master plumber, saving money for the upcoming school year.

By my senior year of high school, I was called into an office by a counselor, a teacher, and the vice principal. They told me that because I had been working in the trades since I was 14, I would likely make more money than my friends immediately after graduation — but that once they finished college, they would surpass me, and I would regret not going.

What they did not know was that my family needed me. I chose the trades not because I lacked options, but because I had purpose.

Another influence on my decision was my father's partner, Joseph Sibilly — a man I

respected deeply. His father, a successful lawyer, told him that he would not pay for college until he first learned a trade. During the Great Depression, that same father could not survive as a lawyer — so he became an electrician to support his family.

Joe earned his plumbing license, later went to college, became a history teacher — and eventually returned to plumbing full-time.

That lesson stayed with me: a trade is security. A trade is independence. A trade is resilience.

If we build strong trade programs here in the Virgin Islands, we give young people — especially those who may not see themselves as "college material" — a path to dignity, stability, and global opportunity. A skilled tradesman can go anywhere in the world and earn a living.

Regarding licensing, I believe we have a strong system in place. When I pursued my master plumbing license, I took the exam three times. The first time I failed the written portion. The second time I failed the practical. The third time I passed both.

The feeling of earning that license remains one of the proudest moments of my life.

The test is hard — and it should be. When the Virgin Islands issues a license, it should represent excellence. In Texas, for example, the failure rate is nearly 78 percent. A rigorous standard is not a weakness; it is a strength.

However, I would like to see us improve preparation. Trade schools and structured test-prep programs — similar to what many states use — could better equip apprentices and create a pathway for those currently working unlicensed to become legitimate professionals.

Accountability is another critical issue. License holders who sign permits must stand behind the work done under their credentials. If we strengthen accountability, we protect the public and uphold the integrity of the trades.

We are entering a season of unprecedented federal investment. The Virgin Islands have extraordinary tradesmen ready to build our future. But bonding remains a significant barrier for local contractors.

I have operated businesses here for over 26 years and completed major projects including Carden Beach, the Ritz-Carlton rebuild, the Westin restoration, and the Hampton. Yet when I pursued a federal bond, I was required to secure it with my personal home. In many states, bonding capacity grows with performance, not just asset value. Here, our system limits local companies and creates disadvantages that often force partnerships that dilute local ownership.

I would like to work collaboratively to explore solutions that allow local contractors to compete fairly — without having to sell what they have worked decades to build.

Additionally, many local contractors struggle with federal paperwork, contracts, and compliance requirements. I have seen good men — skilled, hardworking, reputable — take on federal work and suffer financially because they were unprepared for the administrative burden.

I would advocate for educational clinics and coordinated efforts to equip our contractors with the tools they need to succeed. If we are not proactive, we risk damaging the very trade community we depend on to rebuild and grow.

In closing, this is my home. My wife and I, our five children, and our four grandchildren are rooted here. Our entire family works within our businesses. We are deeply invested — not just financially, but generationally.

With licenses across multiple trades and decades of hands-on experience, I believe I bring a unique perspective and practical understanding that can serve this board and this community well.

I stand ready to serve — not only for today, but for the future of our islands.

Thank you for your consideration and I am available to answer any questions the Committee may have.