

# Opening Statement of Wilbur Smith

Nominee, V.I. Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation

St. Thomas–St. John District Governing Board

Committee on Rules and Judiciary

September 10, 2026

Good morning, Madam Chair, Senator Joseph, members of the Committee, and members of the 36th Legislature.

I am honored to appear before you today regarding my nomination by Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. to serve as a member of the Virgin Islands Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation St. Thomas–St. John District Governing Board.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to Governor Bryan for the confidence he has placed in me, and to Senator Carla Joseph and the members of this Committee for providing me the opportunity to appear before you today.

I do not view this nomination simply as an appointment to a board.

I view it as an opportunity to serve.

Throughout my professional career, I have developed a deep appreciation for the importance of strong healthcare organizations, effective leadership, sound governance, accountability, and—most importantly—the people who depend upon our healthcare system when they are at their most vulnerable.

That is why I am particularly interested in serving on this District Governing Board.

My understanding of the role of a governing board is that it is not to manage the hospital day-to-day. Management has that responsibility.

The board's responsibility is different.

The board must provide **strategic oversight, accountability, stewardship, advocacy, and governance.**

It must ask the difficult questions.

Are we providing safe, quality care?

Are we using public resources responsibly?

Are we attracting and retaining the healthcare professionals we need?

Are our facilities, technology, and infrastructure adequate for the needs of our community?

Are patients and their families being treated with dignity and respect?

And perhaps most importantly, are we preparing our healthcare system for the future rather than simply responding to today's problems?

If confirmed, those are the questions I intend to bring to the board table.

I also believe that hospital governance must look beyond the walls of the hospital.

Healthcare is not simply about treating people after they become sick.

It is also about prevention, access, continuity of care, workforce development, community health, emergency preparedness, technology, and partnerships throughout the healthcare system.

Our hospitals are critical institutions within the Virgin Islands, but they do not operate in isolation.

They are part of a larger healthcare ecosystem that includes physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, behavioral health providers, emergency medical services, long-term care, community organizations, public health agencies, and, most importantly, the patients and families we serve.

Effective governance requires us to see that entire picture.

I also recognize that the Virgin Islands faces unique challenges.

We are an island community. We must contend with workforce recruitment and retention, transportation and logistics, limited resources, aging infrastructure, the cost of healthcare delivery, and the challenges associated with providing specialized services in an island environment.

These realities make strong governance even more important.

We cannot always control the challenges before us.

But we can control how we prepare, how we prioritize, how we measure performance, how we hold ourselves accountable, and how we work together to find solutions.

If confirmed, I would bring to the board a perspective grounded in **healthcare leadership, strategic thinking, operational understanding, fiscal stewardship, and a commitment to patient-centered care.**

I would also bring something that I believe is equally important:

**the willingness to listen.**

A governing board should not operate from assumptions.

It should listen to the people who provide care.

It should listen to physicians and nurses.

It should listen to employees.

It should listen to patients and families.

It should listen to the community.

And it should listen to the data.

Good governance brings those perspectives together and transforms them into informed decisions.

I believe accountability and advocacy can—and should—exist together.

We must hold our healthcare institutions accountable for performance, while at the same time advocating for the resources, policies, workforce, and infrastructure necessary for those institutions to succeed.

My goal would not be to arrive at the board with all the answers.

My goal would be to help ask the right questions, identify opportunities, evaluate the evidence, and work collaboratively toward solutions.

Ultimately, I believe the measure of a healthcare governing board is not how many meetings it holds or how many policies it approves.

The measure is whether its decisions contribute to better outcomes for the people it serves.

If a patient receives safer care, if a family has greater confidence in its hospital, if a healthcare professional has the resources and environment needed to provide excellent care, if public dollars are used wisely, and if our healthcare system becomes stronger and more sustainable—that is meaningful governance.

That is the kind of service I would hope to provide.

Members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to be considered for this responsibility.

I recognize that serving on this Board carries a significant public trust.

If confirmed, I will approach that responsibility with **integrity, independence, accountability, collaboration, and a genuine commitment to the health and wellbeing of the people of the Virgin Islands.**

I look forward to working with the Governor, the Legislature, the Corporation, hospital leadership, healthcare professionals, my fellow board members, and the community to help strengthen our healthcare system and ensure that it is positioned to serve generations of Virgin Islanders to come.

Thank you for your consideration, your time, and the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am prepared to answer any questions the Committee may have.