

Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks and Recreation | June 11, 2021

Legislature USVI

June 11, 2021 · 4.8 hours · gov

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00:00:00 Let's get started. Thank you. We'll be right back. [3 such phrases repeated 21 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:10:30 We'll be right back. You've got to be dead Thank you. good morning good morning good morning to everyone the committee and youth sports parks and recreation

0:21:57 is hereby called to order. Madam Clerk, roll call please. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. Dwayne M. DeGraff present. Senator Alma Francis Heidegger. Senator Alma Francis Heidegger absent. Senator Jayvon E. James Sr. Senator Jayvon E. James Sr., present. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Senator Franklin D. Johnson, absent. Senator Carla Joseph? Present. Senator Carla Joseph, present. Senator Stephen D. Payne. Senator Stephen D. Payne, absent.

0:22:48 Senator Samuel Carriong. Present. Senator Samuel Carriong, present. Mr. Chair, we have four members present, three members absent. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Do we have any correspondents to be read into the record this morning? No, Mr. Chair. Please, for the record. Mark. Senator Pavne present.

0:23:24 Can you please read today's agenda into the record? Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks, and Recreation, Friday, June 11, 2021, 10 a.m., Fritz E. Lowe's Legislative Hall, St. Croix. The Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks and Recreation has scheduled a hearing for Friday, June 11th, 2021 at 10 a.m. to receive testimony on the following. An update from the Department of Education's Division of Sports and Athletics regarding student athletic development programs and initiatives to include the results of the Combine in a Bubble and Honoring a Legend Series. Invited testifiers, Honorable Raquel Berry Benjamin Commissioner, Department of Education. Honorable Calvert-White, Commissioner of Sports, Parks, and Recreation. Overall Isaac, President, Interscholastics Athletic Association, St. Thomas, St. John. Lucille Hobson, President, Interscholastics Athletic Association, St. Croix.

- 0:24:46 Thank you, Madam Clerk. Please mark Senator Alma Francis Halligar present. Good morning, good morning once again and welcome to my colleagues, testifiers, all that are tuned in in today's committee hearing. First of all, let me start off by telling everyone that is listening that today there's presently a cleanup that has taken place in Frederickstead, the Virgin Islands Clean Street, in recognizing World Ocean Day. So there's a cleanup from the street to the reef cleanup. And it's today, Friday, June 11th, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- 0:25:42 by the Frederickstead Fish Market. So I would like to urge everyone with a little time on their hands to please come out this morning and participate. It's up to all of us to keep our islands beautiful and protect our environment, so very important. So please, if you're free, give some time out. I wish I was there, but I had to be here doing the people's business in this committee hearing. I also would like to announce that the 34th legislature has reinstituted the Legislative Youth Council.
- 0:26:19 Well, let me speak specific, Legislative Youth Advisory Council. This body will be made up of 16 young Virgin Islanders, four senators, giving the youth of this territory, not one, but multiple seats at the table and an opportunity to weigh in on important issues. There will also be more information forthcoming, but any young person who is interested between the ages of 14 to 23 can learn more and apply today by visiting the legislature website at lejvi.org.
- 0:26:55 So we are encouraging our young people to participate and find out more information online. Also, today, the Committee on Youth Sports, Parks, and Recreation's primary goal is to receive an in-depth understanding of the operations within the Athletic Division of the Department of Education. It is extremely important for us to be cognizant of the successes and challenges facing the development of our student-athletes and the work towards developing of thriving athletic programs in the Virgin Islands. We recognize the value of the athletics in the schools and the significance of it, and it cannot be overlooked. So the athletics have been credited with bringing people together, bridging gaps, and providing opportunities that may not have been available otherwise. So this is very important. And additionally, in having a strong athletic division in the territory, we can open doors for many of our talented young Virgin Islanders to attend top schools and universities throughout the nation through athletic scholarships. And while many see these opportunities as benefiting only young Virgin Islanders, it is much bigger than that. Not only are we lifting up and creating opportunities for Virgin Islander students, but we are also providing the overall portfolio of the territory and heightening our sports tourism industry. Every time one of our athletes is successful, we are all successful. We really need to focus on getting our athletics program back and running, and I trust there has been significant progress since our last hearing. I'm looking forward to a detailed enlightening and robust discussion this morning that should
- 0:28:53 answer many of our questions and concerns that have been asked by various members of the community and also by my colleagues and especially by students and parents. So at this time we would like the testifiers to identify themselves let's start by the department of education good morning senator this is victor some third the acting commissioner of education representing the department of education good morning good morning and with your team can you identify who they have and also they can as you identify them they can also check their their mics we could do a mic test So with me this morning from the Division of Sports and Athletics, we have Director Kenard Kirby-Kalander.
- 0:29:48 Good morning. Ms. Bernaline Tomo, Program Assistant, St. Thomas-St. John. Good morning. And we also have with us Ms. Marisha Butcher, Program Assistant on St. Croix. Hello. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, thank you. And that completes the VIDE team to today's hearing. Thank you, Ackland Commissioner.
- 0:30:20 I'm sorry, I neglected to mention we also have online Attorney Alvincent Hudson, a legal counsel at the Department of Education. Thank you. Thank you. And from the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation. good morning renee hansen assistant commissioner st quay district good morning assistant commissioner hansen good morning vincent roberts assistant commissioner st thomas st john district good morning mr roberts good coming loud and clear and also from the interscholastic athletic Association good morning my name is Leisha Richmond and I am representing the St. Thomas St. John interscholastic Athletic Association good morning anyone else okay i think that's it for today good morning senator carrion i'm sorry i'm having problems with my camera this is lucille hobson president of the st croix interscholastic athletic association i was wondering wondering where you were good morning good morning and thank you for being present, Ms. Hubsan.
- 0:31:51 All right, so I guess we can, before we begin, I also would like to introduce, sure, I would like to introduce my summer intern, Mr. Franklin Martes, can you please stand? I would like to acknowledge him. And Mr. Martes is a sophomore at the University of the Virgin Islands who is majoring in marketing. his favorite hobby when he's not doing school assignments is basketball so mr martes has been instrumental in assisting us in preparing for today's meeting as he is passionate about athletics yeah bring down your mask so everybody could see your face there there we go he has been instrumental in assisting us in preparing today's meeting so thank you mr martes for your assistance And before we begin, Senator Payne, you are recognized for a point of privilege. Can we recognize Senator Payne's mic?

- 0:33:00 Use the other mic. Let's take a one minute recess before we begin. The Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks and Recreation stands at recess for one minute. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you.
- 0:37:39 The Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks and Recreation is back out of recess. Senator Payne, you're recognized for your point of privilege. Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Chair. Good morning, good morning colleagues, good morning to the listening and viewing audience, good morning, good morning to the certifiers. I'd like to take it as a minute just to introduce my summer intern, Ms. Imani Petras, aka Princess, a proud graduate of the St. Joseph College School, who plans to attend UVI in the fall to major in English studies.
- 0:38:17 Welcome to your first summer employment, so much internship at the legislature. And I already advised my chief of staff, if you do well, and I'm sure you're gonna do well, we'll keep you on a part-time basis throughout your schooling. All right, so do well. All right, thank you very much for the time, Mr. Chair. You're welcome, Senator Payne. That was great to see our young people, especially here in the legislature, getting involved. So we welcome you as we welcome also Mr. Martes. Acting Commissioner Soames, you are recognized to begin with your testimony. Before you do, though, I would like to recognize Senator Franklin Johnson, and please mark Senator Johnson present. I think Commissioner, you may begin with your testimony.
- 0:39:15 Thank you, Senator. Good morning, Honorable Samuel Carrion, Chairman of the Committee on Youth, Sports, Parks and Recreation. Other committee members, other senators present, my colleagues, my endeared colleagues from department of sports parks and recreation our friends at the interscholastic association athletic association and fellow virgin islanders i am victor sum the third the acting commissioner of education appearing today on behalf of the honorable raquel berry benjamin commissioner of education to provide testimony on the division of sports and athletics student athletic development programs and initiatives to include the results of the combine in the bubble and honoring a legend tournament. Present with me today are Kennard Kirby-Calendar, the Director of the Division of Sports and Athletics, Ms. Bernaline Tomo, Program Assistant St. Thomas St. John, and Ms. Marisha Butcher, Program Assistant on St. Croix. Also present with us this morning is attorney al vincent hudson the department's legal counsel the combine in a bubble was the brain child of the department of sports parks and recreation the virgin islands department of education and the department of health partnered with the department of sports parks and recreation to sponsor and host the combine on november 4th to the 11th the 11th to the 18th and the 18th to the 20th the 25th of 2020. it was designed to give upper level 11th and 12th grade student athletes an opportunity to train in a safe and healthy environment in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the Combine served to introduce student athletes to video profiles for college and university recruiters and provide information on college and NCAA eligibility requirements. the process of creating a combine in a bubble entailed several phases to include
- 0:41:50 venue selection student athletes had to train in a safe environment because of the covid19 pandemic all participants to include the student athletes coaches and trainers and administrative personnel were sequestered in one place referred to as the bubble the university of the virgin islands was selected as the bubble for two reasons university had all of the items needed for the combine in a bubble with one exception those items were residence halls a gymnasium and fitness center on the saint thomas campus and cafeterias baseball was conducted at the dc canigator ballpark on saint croix the concept of a bubble was to maintain sequestration of student athletes and other participants from external audiences as classes at the university were being conducted virtually the campuses on st croix and st thomas were almost deserted thus providing an ideal location where the participants would have no interactions with individuals who were not associated with the bubble selection of coaches the department of sports parks and recreation selected coaches from their staff the interscholastic athletic associations and various local sports federations in addition coaches were required to remain at the selected venue for the duration of the training selection of student athletes student athletes were selected by the coaches physical education department chairpersons and teachers based on the students past performances in various leagues
- 0:43:45 and those with the potential to acquire athletic scholarships after student athletes were selected the division of sports and athletics check students grade point averages or gpa all student athletes were required to have a minimum gpa of 70 in order to be eligible student athletes were selected for sports as depicted in table 1e both sports being boys basketball of which they were a total of 15 participants boys baseball for which there was a total of 19 participants girls basketball with a total of nine participants girls softball with a total of 14 participants and co-ed volleyball with a total of 21 participants this brings the total number of student athlete participants in the combine in a bubble to 78 students logistics the university provided the room accommodations sports parks and recreation led the organizational process scheduling the overall coordination of the combine and handled ground transportation and meal collection and distribution the department of health provided free rapid covid 19 testing and the department of education managed student athlete consent forms student insurance air transportation and meal preparation and packaging the needs of the student athletes

- who participated in the combat in the bubble were comprehensively met by the department of sports parks and recreation the university of the virgin islands and the department of education from meeting with the student athletes and their
- 0:45:38 parents prior to entering the bubble to air transportation for those who had to travel to a sister island where a particular combine was being held to room and board for all participants to wi-fi access for all students who are attending classes virtually and controlled practices by experienced coaches the cost for conducting the combine in a bubble was 107 307 dollars and 48 with the department of sports parks and recreation and the department of education absorbing all of the expenses the funding source for the department of education was the tourism revolving fund to cover these costs the basic breakdown of expenses is shown in table 2b anecdotal evidence suggests that student athlete participation in the combine in the bubble helped to contribute to scholarships by creating exposure for students the department of sports parks and recreation demonstrated innovation by providing an athletic opportunity in the midst of the covid 19 pandemic and approximately nine of the student athletes were able to acquire scholarships to attend a college or university for the 2021-2022 school year athletes that were in the bubble and earned scholarships are listed in table 3c some of these students that were in the combine also participated in the honoring a legend tournament the concept of a combine in a bubble was conceived again by the department of sports parks and recreation mainly because the covid19 pandemic had stopped organized team sports in the territory entirely the department of sports parks and recreation saw an opportunity to help
- 0:47:40 some of the student athletes who are losing an entire year of playing sports and perhaps an opportunity to gain a scholarship as well after partnering with the department of health and the department of education and seeing the success of the first combine in the bubble the department of sports parks and recreation saw where the concept of bringing the most talented upper level student athletes together to train and to develop portfolios could be something that could be held annually similar to the combine in the bubble the initial honoring a legend tournament the initial honoring a legend tournaments were a joint operation between the department of education and the department of sports parks and recreation the division of sports and athletics proposed a series of return to sports athletic events for varsity and junior varsity students student athletes called honoring a legend the purpose of the tournaments the purpose of the tournaments was to one provide student athletes a return to return to sports activity to allow student athletes to build or continue to build their recruitment portfolios and three to honor local sports legends the first in this series of tournaments was held on two consecutive weekends in april of this year at the dc canada ballpark on st croix and featured girls softball and boys baseball in a controlled environment the tournament was held in honor of eugene genex tom janex thomas a long time virgilans baseball and softball coach and
- 0:49:31 instructor mr thomas had been a positive influence in the lives of many ball players on st croix in our opinion and feedback from the virginians community at large the tournaments were very successful viewership statistics were compiled by livewire sports for girls softball and mad hot media for boys baseball and are depicted in table 4d for softball viewership totaled 11 000 across three days thursday friday and saturday and for boys baseball viewership totaled 26 100 again across the three days thursday friday and saturday Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, student athletes have not been able to play or in many cases even practice the sports that they love. These games are the only avenue for many of our children to advance to a collegiate program.
- 0:50:38 The hope is that this tournament and other similar activities will help fill the void created by the pandemic. Even though the end of the pandemic was uncertain and baseball and softball were considered low-risk sports, COVID-19 protocols were strictly adhered to. To help minimize the risk associated with COVID-19, all participants were tested by the Department of Health one or two days prior to participation and then situated in a controlled environment for the duration of the tournament. Teams from the District of St. Croix stayed at the Tamron Reef Hotel, eliminating the need for them to be removed from the controlled environment that was created.
- 0:51:26 Teams from the St. Thomas St. John District stayed at the Caravelle Hotel and the Company House Hotel. Similar to the Combine in a Bubble, putting together the first iteration of the Honoring a legend tournaments of a four core items venue were four core items venue coaches selection selection of players and the selection of players and logistics in addition to those four consideration has had also been given to room and board and the first inaugural honoree the choice of baseball and softball as the first sports of the honoring and legend series was easier than choosing other sports because of their popularity and low risk designation by the cdc the dc canada ballpark was the natural choice as a venue since no other park in the territory was prepared to accommodate both baseball and softball the selected coaches were all previously certified by the department of education the coaches then selected players who were vetted by the division of sports and athletics room board and transportation were all provided by the division of sports and athletics as with the combine the student athletes were properly supported not only by the chaperones and coaches but by personnel from the division of sports and athletics who are in close proximity at all times territory-wide student participation is reflected in table 5e for

girls junior varsity softball they were a total of 27 players

- 0:53:15 for girls varsity softball there was a total of 26 players for boys junior varsity baseball there was a total of 29 players and for boys varsity baseball there was a total of 28 players bringing the grand total to 110 student athlete participation in the honoring a legend tournament the cost of holding the inaugural honoring a legend tournament was 141 069.63 from the tourism revolving fund with the department of education being responsible for the majority of the expenses and the department of sports parks and recreation covering 50 of the cost of meals the breakdown of expenses is shown in table 6f after experiencing the combine in the bubble in a bubble the division of sports analytics was better prepared for subsequent programs for example meals were create were catered as the st croix food authority could not provide meals on weekends another issue that arose was parents of the student athletes wanting to come into what was deemed a restricted area because of the pandemic eventually the division of sports and athletics and the department of sports parks and recreation allowed a few families into the stands once they they were able to prove they were vaccinated. As we sat in the stands and witnessed the joy and excitement expressed by our young student athletes, we believe that the tournament was, without a doubt, a success. All of the department's goals were accomplished, including honoring Mr. Thomas, whose family was on hand to accept the kudos issued to him. The inaugural honoring a legend tournament
- 0:55:12 is the first in what the Department of Education hopes will be a string of junior varsity and varsity all-star tournaments as we celebrate our return to sports and improve student athletic performance other planned tournaments for the remainder of calendar year 2021 tentatively include track and field cross country for august of 2021 flag and tackle football pending approval of the department of health for september 2021 soccer in December 2020 I'm sorry December 2021 and January 2022 co-ed volleyball in October of 2021 and co-ed basketball in November of 2021.
- 0:56:03 In order to ensure that the Division of Sports and Athletics continues to provide programming for student athletes coaches and other school personnel table 7g depicts what is currently implemented or will be implemented in the 2021 school year the first program is the coaches certification program or ccp1 this program is described as school coaches having to complete a biannual online certification exam administered by the national federation of state high school associations to qualify on a variety of courses to include the fundamentals of coaching first aid and courses on concussion this program is fully implemented by the division of sports and athletics The next program is Coaches Certification Program, CCP2.
- 0:57:03 The purpose of this program is to ensure the next generation of school coaches are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to coach student athletes. Coach trainers will teach up-and-coming coaches the fundamentals and advanced principles of coaching. coaching this program is in the planning stages and partial coach trainers have been identified the following program is students as game officials or sego this program will teach and mentor sports minded students who do not necessarily wish to be student athletes about school about sports related professions such as umpiring or refereeing sports agents physical therapy team management statistician videographer etc this is currently in the planning stage we're excited about the student athlete roadmap to college the division of sports and athletics has developed an outreach program where we will physically go to meet with students parents guidance counselors and a planning guide to inform and assist high school student athletes their parents their coaches guidance counselors and school administrators about the college admissions and the ncaa eligibility process this program is in the final planning stages next program being developed is the sports equipment inventory management system this will begin initially as a digital document to keep an accurate count and condition of schools interscholastic sports equipment as the school year starts it will be as i indicated
- 0:58:54 a digital document at the same time we are working on an online process for this program the planning stages have been completed training and full implementation of this program will be at the start of the 2021-2022 school year the student athlete tracking system as you know the department uses power school which is a student management information system student athletes will be identified into power school under a special programs function this currently exist at the department there is no comprehensive statistical database for our student athletes however the division of sports and athletics will integrate technology into sports programs by use by utilizing sophisticated software such as cybersports to collect statistics for baseball basketball softball football and soccer funding for this software is being pursued via the American Rescue Plan and or a special legislative grant the pandemic training policy for school athletes the division of sports and athletics is developing a policy in conjunction with our good friends at the Department of Health that addresses training and sporting activities defined as high risk medium risk, and low risk for COVID-19.
- 1:00:30 The deadline for policy completion is July 15, 2021, for vetting and approval and implementation, full implementation for the 2021-2022 school year. Senator Carrion and members of this committee, we are here today with the utmost of respect. And we pray that this respect is returned. We come seeking cooperation and collaboration. We come in peace. We come to listen, to actively listen to your questions and concerns and to act.

- 1:01:18 We come to share, to learn, and improve. In closing, the Virgin Islands Department of Education, Division of Sports and Athletics, was pleased to have been a partner with sister agencies to afford our student athletes game time in the Combine in the Bubble and the Honoring and Legend Tournament. as the territory continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1:01:50 The department's intent is to provide other opportunities for our student athletes during the 2021-2022 school year, given that all is well from a health perspective. It is a new day for education worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way we teach and execute student programs. However, the Division of Sports and Athletics is up to the challenge and will continue to find innovative ways to provide student athletes opportunities to improve their academic and athletic abilities, which in turn will translate to success in post-secondary education, professional careers, and in life. Thank you for the opportunity to share this information.
- 1:02:41 We stand ready to answer any questions you may have. That concludes my testimony. Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Soames, or Acting Commissioner Soames, please, excuse me, for your testimony and your willingness to collaborate and work in unity. So thank you for that. We will now hear a testimony from the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation.
- 1:03:15 Yes. I'll go ahead and read Commissioner of White testimony into the record. And your name is for the record? Commissioner Roberts. You may proceed. Good day, Senator Carrione, Chairman of the Community of Youth Sports, Parks and Recreation. I am in receipt of your invitation to testify on the Department of Sports, Park and Recreation's role in the Combine in the Bubble and the honoring of the Legend Tournament. Unfortunately, before your invitation, I was scheduled to be out of the territory on June 11th to attend the International Basketball Federation FIBA qualifier for our senior women's national basketball team. for the past few years the sbr has made financial commitments to our volleyball baseball men's basketball women's basketball federation for the international competition as a former senior men's national team player one of one of our most significant downfalls was the support that we received since the start of my tenure as commissioner have made a conscious effort to increase this department's support towards our national federations. Today, June 11th, along with the president of FIBA, I will serve in my official capacity as Commissioner of Sports, Parks, and Recreation with several other dignitaries from competing countries as our senior women's team prepare to compete. Both Assistant Commissioners Renee Hansen and Vincent Roberts are present in my absence.
- 1:05:12 As it pertains to the Department's role in the above-mentioned Combined in a Bubble, my staff and I have articulated in great detail the preparation, planning, and execution of the bubble on numerous occasions. On November 30, 2020, I testified before the 33rd legislature and explained that both Assistant Commissioners Hanson and Roberts came together and brainstormed ideas to help our student-athletes.
- 1:05:45 Hence, Combined in a Bubble was born. The concept of Combined in a Bubble was a well-put-together plan that included the Department of Sports, Park and Recreation, the VAE, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the University of the Virgin Islands. The idea would take elite athletes from various sports and put them in a bubble where they were trained in their respective sport.
- 1:06:18 Initially the department wanted this initiative to include 10, 11, and 12 grade students for two weeks. consulting with our health professionals they suggested limiting the grades to 11 and 12 and reducing the length of time to just one week the program would house students athletes at st thomas and st croix university of the virgin island campuses doh conducted drive-through testing for our students two days before students enter the bubble once in the bubble we we require students to log into the class the scheduled classes from 8 a.m to 3 p.m students will allow an hour to complete homework assignments our coaches held training training drills workouts and scrimmages from 4 p.m to 7 p.m Although we recognize our athletic skills, they are students first, so we included an informational component to the event. We engage professional individuals to educate our athletes on topics like the Cliring House, the application process, the importance of SAT and ACT scores, financial aid and explain Pell Grant assistance. I consider this a one-stop shop in preparing our student athletes for the next step in life, the possibility of an athletic scholarship. The department home to create player profiles for each athlete. However, after compiling the footage for the five days that there was not enough individual footage for it for every player the
- 1:08:12 footage we did receive is an introduction to a player profile breakfast lunch and dinner were provided for our athletes breakfast and lunch supplied by the ide school lunch program while while dinner was provided by a hired cater paid by DSPR. Roughly 90% of the trainers were highly qualified individuals in their respective sport, whom I work for the Department of Sports, Park, and Recreation. We were able to serve a total of 78 student athletes in the combine. And on February 24, 2021, I once again testify before this committee the combined success and placed on the record that four players had received athletic scholarships a number that has now grown to eight the training and execution that made the combine a reality was extensive and thorough the honoring a legend tournament was a vide and dsbr collaboration with

vide as the lead agency the spr was in charge of officiating and scoring the games the dspr also managed crowd control making sure that our covert precautionary guidelines were followed in addition to funding from our youth programs that come the department paid for half of the total that was so black that was submit submitted for food to feed at least and of course dspr oversaw free preparation before during and after the games i commend my i commend both my assistant commissioners for a job well done the sbr intends to remain open to planning more events with our sister agencies that will showcase the talent of our local athletes to all that made every to to to all that made both events possible i want to thank you for the contributions personally i'm confident either ac hansen or ac robbers will answer any question thank you and god bless thank you assistant commissioner for representing your commissioner for the testimony now let's hear a testimony from the inter scholastic interscholastic athletic association

1:10:43 from saint thomas st john isaac thank you good morning senator samuel carrion members of the committee on youth sports parks and recreation other respected legislators and the listening public thank you for this opportunity to once again address this body representing the saint thomas st john interscholastic athletic association my name is leisha richmond and i am the executive secretary and have been asked by orville isaac chairman of the board and therese hodge president to speak on behalf of the saint thomas st john interscholastic athletic association the role of the saint thomas st john interscholastic athletic association to let you know we are a member of the national federation of state high schools and fhs on the state level we are a 501 c3 non-profit organization in good standing with the lieutenant governor's office of trademarks and corporations our organization is comprised of all schools public private parochial and home schools in the saint thomas st john's school district and an associate school from the british virgin islands we are a promoter of interscholastic athletic competition and tournament number two promoted sports the saint thomas st john interscholastic athletic association promotes the following sports volleyball boys and girls

1:12:36 flag football co-educational cross-country boys and girls basketball boys and girls track and field boys and girls baseball boys softball girls and soccer for boys and girls our sport seasons the The St. Thomas, excuse me, our sports seasons have been listed in our constitution and bylaws since the inception of our organization in 1982. They have specific starting dates and can best be generalized for this discussion as fall, winter, and spring sports. They are listed as follows. Fall, volleyball, flag football, and cross country. Winter, basketball, track and field.

1:13:34 Spring, baseball, softball, and soccer. Levels, the St. Thomas St. John Interscholastic Athletic Association and the St. Croix Interscholastic Athletic Association promotes sports on all four levels at corresponding times. The elementary level, grades three through six, middle school, junior high, grades six through eight, junior varsity, grades nine through 10, and varsity grades 11 and 12. We also have number five, promoter's insurance. We are insured to promote all of the above listed sports and activities at all of the venues available for our use in each of our districts. Please note that our insurance costs are significant and we are awaiting allocated funding to be released. I am present today to also testify in the role that the St. Thomas St. John Interscholastic Athletic Association played in the organization and administration of the Combine Bubble and the Honoring a Legend Tournament.

1:14:56 I can honestly testify that the St. Thomas St. John Interscholastic Athletic Association was not involved in either activity. I can also honestly testify that the collaboration between the two independent iaa volunteer organizations in the promotion of interscholastic athletics is exemplary with both organizations working hard to fulfill our roles in each of our districts and combined planned competitions it is my sincere hope that looking forward we we can expect a release of allocated funds to the IAAs so that the two IAAs of the U.S. Virgin Islands can purchase and begin the implementation of the Our School Today activity scheduler and COVID tracing program in the fall of the 2021-2022 school year. This ends my testimony, thank you.

1:16:00 Thank you, Ms. Richmond, and I must correct that because I said Mr. Isaac is absent. So, Ms. Richmond, thank you for your testimony. Ms. Hubson, you may proceed now with your testimony. You're on mute, Ms. Hobson.

1:16:30 Sorry, I'm sorry. Good morning, Honorable Senator Samuel Carriong and other distinguished members of the Committee on Youth, Sports, Path, and Recreation, members of the 34th Legislature, fellow testifiers, and our listening and viewing audience. My name is Lucille Hobson, president of the St. Croix Interscholastic Athletic Association, and I'm very appreciative of the opportunity to testify on behalf of the St. Croix Interscholastic Association regarding our role in the Combine Bubble and honoring a legend tournament.

1:17:10 The SCIAA is a voluntary organization composed of 2,000 plus athletes from approximately 20 public, private, parochial, and homeschooled. It strives to promote good sportsmanship and a cooperative spirit among its member schools. It endeavors to maintain high standards so that each student athlete competing in each school has the same benefits. In the field of athletics, its interest is the safety of the participants. It is on this principle that its athletic rules are based. The SCIA operates on the constitution and bylaws which outlines the scope and purpose of the association. It contains the standards of eligibility to be met by the student athletes for attaining the privilege of participating in

inter-school contests and rules controlling the participation among schools. By adoption of the Constitution and bylaws through its membership, member schools have by their initiative acted to operate and discipline their interscholastic activities and contexts.

- 1:18:29 Schools are divided in classifications according to grade levels so that schools will have an opportunity to compete for honors among other schools of their own level. Schools are divided into four levels elementary middle school junior high and high school the sciaa provides services to its member schools in the organization and administration of district and territorial events in the following boys baseball basketball cross country flag football golf tennis track soccer which is coed and volleyball girls basketball cheerleading cross country golf netball soccer softball tennis track and volleyball the sciaa sets standards for the registration training and evaluation of officials in all competitive activities rule books are distributed and rule clinics for coaches and officials are held throughout the district by sciaa trained instruction instructors the sciaa is a member of the national federation of state high school association an organization of state high school associations united to solve problems common to such organizations and to secure the benefit of cooperative research and action action in regard to our role in the combine bubble and honoring a legend tournament the st croix interscholastic association was asked by the department of sports park and recreation to assist in identifying seniors and juniors who would benefit from their participation in the combine bubble in addition we assisted by providing airline tickets for some private school athletes and several 2020 graduates who are affected by the COVID-19 due to the fact that the Department of Education was only providing tickets for the public school athletes. The SCIA was not involved in any collaboration with the Department of Education pertaining to the Honoring a Legend tournament. It is evident from my testimony that interscholastic sports is alive and well in the territory sports are critical to the development of sound mind and
- 1:21:01 bodies and it is imperative for the department of education the department of sports park and recreation and the synchroi interscholastic associations to work in unison to provide positive outlets for our youth thank you for this opportunity to represent the synchroi the Interscholastic Athletic Association. Thank you, Ms. Hobson. And I think it was a great, okay, we got you back on.
- 1:21:40 You're frozen there for a second, but I think you have completed your testimony. Thank you for your testimony. Now colleagues, we will go into a seven minute round of questioning. We will begin with Senator Carla Joseph. You recognize Senator Joseph for your seven minutes. A pleasant good morning, Mr. Chairman.
- 1:22:17 Thank you. A pleasant good morning, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, colleagues, listening audience, and especially our testifiers who have presented a testimony today, a wonderful Friday morning. I want to begin my questioning with Mr. Vincent Roberts, who is the Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation.
- 1:22:50 First of all, Assistant Commissioner Roberts, I want to really commend you and your team for thinking up of this innovative way to have competition and prepare our athletes given the environment that we are presently enduring. In a comment that was made by one of the presenters, specifically Ms. Theresa Hodge, the testifier for the St. Thomas St. John Interscholastic Athletic Association, she mentioned that for both the Combined Bubble and Honoring a Legend Tournament that they were not involved in either activity. Would you be able to expound on the reasoning behind of their disassociation or lack of inclusion in this activity?
- 1:23:56 Are we talking about IA St. Thomas St. John District? Yes, sir. Okay. When we first started the meetings, all parties were included, all parties were brought to the table. So it was, I remember our first meeting, I think Ms. Richmond was on the meeting to be exact. exact. When we talked about IA helping with identifying coaches, identify the technical part of it. So if they were not part of it, I guess they just had to bring to the table at a particular time. Okay. And so you did invite them to the table.
- 1:24:48 They were definitely invited along with Ms. Hobson, and we, like I said from the beginning, the process was a fast-moving process because we basically put all this together, the whole combine, in less than six weeks. So when we initially met, we brought everyone to the table, all the stakeholders and we requested um what we wanted from what we required from each stakeholder each division and um everyone was supposed to go back and identify what they could help us with on that and we moved on from there okay so the question then would be to miss lecia richard who was richmond who testified miss richmond what was the disconnect why you are making statement in your testimony that you were in your association, which is a 501c3 was not involved in both the combined bubble as well as honoring a legend. And if you could be just succinct, that would be helpful. Absolutely. Thank you for this opportunity. Yes, we were involved in a meeting that was the first meeting, but beyond that, the IAA was, you know, was not included in any other meetings that went beyond that. Individuals were asked for participants, but not the IAA as a whole. So they reached out to individuals and spoke to them, which, you know, but not the IAA as a whole.

- 1:26:38 And the coaches, the IAA does not have any coaches. All of the coaches come from the member schools. So I just thought I'd also clarify that. Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. Just for the clarification, if you were at the table at the inception, how is it that you didn't reach back out to the Department of Sports and Recreation? You don't have to answer that right now, and I don't need to have an answer because it seems like there's a disconnect. In communication, it's not just a one-way street. It is a two-way street. It goes back and forth. Now, let me switch my questioning to the assistant commissioner who came in peace, Mr. Victor Sohm. How are you doing today, Mr. Sohm?
- 1:27:32 Good morning, Senator Joseph. I am well, thank you. Wonderful. So I am a peaceful person as well, as I'm sure you know. I wanted to ask you some questions relative to your testimony. I am focused on page four of your testimony and specifically if you could provide us what is driving up the cost for air travel. What type of air travel were we using that caused us to spend \$12,000 in air travel in consideration that I'm presuming that the total of persons was 78, and you may have had how many inter-island, did you have inter-island competitions that it warranted travel between St. Thomas and St. John District to St. Croix District and vice versa? So thank you for the question, Senator. It's very much appreciated um the department of education generally uses seaborne airline the department of education generally uses seaborne airlines because that is who we have an account with and they can accommodate larger groups than other carriers in the territory um so for example um in the combine uh softball and baseball were conducted on the island of St. Croix So students who resided in the St. Thomas St. John District would have needed to travel, may I proceed?
- 1:29:11 Mr. Chairman? Yes, yes, you may. He's answering the question. Yes, he may. Yeah, so students who needed to attend the Combine in a Bubble for softball or baseball would have traveled from the St. Thomas St. John District to the St. Croix district to participate in that combine so different sporting activities athletic events trainings were held on specific islands and we needed to ferry students between the various islands depending upon what sport they were involved in thank you kindly for the answer Mr. Soong, Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for the leeway.
- 1:30:03 You have a follow-up? Senator, yeah, we will have a second round. Senator Joseph. Senator DeGraff? You're recognized for your seven minutes. Good morning. Good morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, testifiers. I'm present. Assistant Commissioner Soames, you mentioned that tackle football is coming back this year.
- 1:30:42 one what is the insurance is there a specific insurance that you have for these students in this high contact sport of tackle football there's a different insurance could you speak to that please thank you senator the question is very much appreciated let me preface the answer by saying we had an opportunity last Friday, I believe it was last Friday, last Friday to meet with football coaches, all football coaches at the four public high schools. And we also invited the Department of Health because we have a daily, a very intimate relationship with the Department of Health.
- 1:31:32 And so that meeting was for the coaches to share with the Department of Education and share with the Department of Health plans to begin non-contact training for tackle football. So health is important because they're guiding the department and coaches as well in how to proceed to ensure that our students are safe once game play is ready for tackle football. so we are we the coaches submitted a plethora of information to the department of health on how they would proceed with training for tackle football non-contact training the department of health is currently reviewing that information and it is our deep and abiding hope that the department of health will provide approval with respect to insurance for football we we provide a separate insurance for football players but miss bernaline tomo the program assistant for the division of sports and athletics can provide the detailed information that you are requesting miss tomo she works on that exclusively senator de graf thank you yes mr go ahead please good morning bernalyn tomah program assistant for syndrome saint saint john at this present time we're looking into the insurance because the insurance we had wasn't the full adequate insurance as it may seem but it covered more than enough to assist but what we need is a more adequate and at this time the insurance company said they're going to work because at the time they said they did not have it but they're gonna work on it to give us a more adequate so they're gonna keep us posted on the insurance information okay uh are they looking for in um catastrophic insurance because that's what's needed anything less don't waste your time what are they looking
- 1:33:40 for that is that a criteria yes it is a criteria so it could be covered because when i had it there say there was they did not have the insurance anymore to do the tackle so in conversation the new insurance company saying that they're going to have the catastrophic for us to carry on with the tackle football okay now where would the games be played on saint thomas at this present time once we have games we're not we have to consult with sports park and recreation first that's what we have to do to see where they will have plans and how can we use their fields or we could use in St. Croix we use the complex field but what we do first we make contact with the principals to schedule if we can have games what we make sure first before we schedule games that we we speak to the respective people as in sports park and recreation we sit down we come up with a plan if these dates are available and they will let us know the school principal which will be at the complex field we'll sit down we ask permission before we put together a plan to carry out the games so it will be

more complex and line up our stadium once we have full permission and full go from sports park and recreation and the principle of the educational complex right now we are in June 2021 uh assistant commissioner some mentioned tackle football will begin in September 2021 so therefore have what what process has been done thus far we haven't made contact as yet with these areas are these personnel yes we've made contact with the football

1:35:44 coaches um we met with them last week Friday uh we are awaiting on health for approval for non-contact training and then once we get approved from a health the ball should begin rolling to schedule locations for uh the possibility of uh uh commissioner soames do we have um equipment the helmets in particular and in regards to COVID 19 helmets that could be placed with face shields on them as a deterrent also to help out the COVID 19 situation is there funding for equipment not the old equipment that they have one minute new equipment i am pleased to announce senator that the districts because the schools provide equipment for football players the St. Thomas District has identified equipment for all sports, and they are now soliciting vendor quotations.

1:36:51 The St. Thomas District will also be following suit. So we expect that by the time school commences and the Department of Health is able to grant approval, that the necessary equipment to address COVID concerns will be available. And where will all of these equipment be stored? since we went to uh the makeshift school with the trailers and so what would you be a storage facility for all of the equipment for the territories that equipment would be stored at the individual schools sir they won't be and it won't be centrally stored because that would be terribly inconvenient it would be may i proceed yes yes you may you may proceed sure that would be stored at the individual schools i don't know if director calendar has any further information but it is my belief that it should be stored at the individual individual schools for practice purpose and game purposes director calendar if i may mr chair just to wrap up uh colima is a calendar answer and then one final question you may wrap up okay good morning um no ac sub what you said is correct uh based on my knowledge they will be stored in the individual schools and uh each each team each uh each section will have their own place to store it i know right now with uh with the schools being such a disarray it might be difficult to find an actual storage storage location but it still would be other schools to find it so that it can be stored in a safe location

1:38:44 okay i i thank you for that i would just like um i would just like to make mention i'm pleased that before you speak, state your name for the record so that Senator Graff could know who is speaking, all right, your title. Mr. DeGraff, you may, Senator DeGraff, you may wrap up. Yes. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the time. Senator Saru, you're recognized for your point of inquiry.

1:39:19 Please recognize Senator Saru's mic. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before my point of inquiry, if the schools are-I come in piece two, by the way. Before my point of inquiry, Mr. Chair, if the schools could possibly be in disarray, incumbent upon the 80 to procure proper storage for the facilities or for the equipment if you know but the point of inquiry would be going back to the insurance question is mr. Richmond aligned yes I'm here okay mr. chair and colleagues I don't think that the appropriate answer was given insofar as insurance for specifically tackle football and we've been blessed over the years not to have any catastrophic injuries um that will place us in a precarious position but if you can expound on what insurance is for football because i think it's um it's misleading to have the public thinking that paying that additional insurance suffices especially in a sport like football so if you if you could expound Ms. Richmond on insurance and all of the above, if the chair would allow it, I ask for your indulgence. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1:40:48 You're welcome, Ms. Richmond. You may proceed and I will like, I failed to recognize Senator Janelle Saru as non-committee member present. So for the record, you may proceed, Ms. Richmond. Thank you, I'm Alicia Richmond from the St. Thomas, St. John and the Scholastic Athletic Association. I've been involved with the insurance process for the Interscholastic Athletic Associations for many years now. One of the things that has always been a giant concern was the fact that we are promoters, and so we have promoters insurance that covers all of the sports, as you heard that we said that we participate in. one of the reasons why the iaas does not do tackle football anymore is because we cannot procure promoters insurance and that for me is a huge concern because no matter who is promoting it if they don't have promoters insurance there's a huge issue there number one um so the second part in regards to student insurance student insurance is an is another issue especially when we're dealing with sports that have the probability of a catastrophic injury one of the things that i can tell you is from working with the athletic with the athletic insurance i have been working with the national federation of high school sport athletics and so with them they use a company called disinger and reed and disinger and reed is the company that ensures all of the 50 states on the state level for all of their sports and athletics so they've

1:42:46 been in this business a long time so we asked when i attended the winter meeting of the nfhs i asked if disinger and reed would come down and help us with our insurance issue here and they were mr reed was very definite in the fact that he would like to come down and help us and he would you know like to to you know get us going so that we could do you know tackle football again um but getting um mr reed down here with disinger and reed seemed to have a few issues um

they contacted the governor's office and um they were uh informed that they would only be able to do the promoter's insurance for the st thomas st john interscholastic athletic association And for them to do that, it wasn't, it wasn't practical.

1:43:46 They only, what they wanted to do was then to be able to bring to the territory special student insurance that covers catastrophic injuries. And that has not been able to happen ever, you know, ever since. So if you have any other questions, I can probably answer them a little more clearly. but that gives you a full background. So like I said, my concern is there's no promoter's insurance. So no one can actually promote tackle football here. And then second, the catastrophic injury for students because the IAA does not insure students all, you know, we, that is not part of our job. Okay, thank you.

1:44:32 Thank you. And I think it was, Mr. Chair, A concerted effort should be made between all of the entities because we're playing sports without the appropriate coverage for our student-athletes, and that has always been a concern. I think the time has come to thoroughly address that. Thank you. Thank you for that, Senator Saru. Senator, carry on if I may. Yeah, I was just going to ask you, Acting Commissioner, what is the department doing regards to that any conversations taking place well i'd like to thank the senator for bringing up that uh concern uh we've had that discussion before i'd like to thank miss richmond for sharing that wealth of information and as the ieas are valuable partners to the department of education we will be reaching out to miss richmond at the conclusion of this meeting to begin a dialogue on dissinger and reid and what we can do to work with um that organization as well as lieutenant governor's office to see if they can provide this catastrophic um insurance for our tackle football players so that will begin at the conclusion of this meeting good um so that means that nothing has been done before uh so this is new information for department education is that my understanding uh acting commissioner no my understanding is that uh football players have had to get additional school insurance beyond the normal school insurance but i do not believe and miss tomo can correct me if i'm wrong i do not believe that additional insurance was tackle or catastrophic insurance. Mr. Moore? Correct. You're correct.

1:46:30 Okay this is this is very important and then and I think this is one of the reasons sometimes these hearings are important even though some of the points that are brought up in the hearings We shouldn't wait for a hearing to really work in that collaborate front. I think Ms. Hubsan stated very clearly ending her testimony to work in unison within all the stakeholders to ensure that our young people then receive what they need and insurance is one of them.

1:47:06 So I'm glad to hear you're going to have a conversation. I think this is something that should have happened before, but it's never too late. So I'm looking forward to hear what's the outcome after you guys have this meeting and the conversation. Yes, Senator, by me, I don't want it to reflect that we haven't been doing anything as Ms. Tomo stated in her remarks, we've been working with the existing insurance provider to address additional insurance for tackle football players specifically. That conversation began a while ago. It is still ongoing. We're still awaiting response. It is just that we realize that there are other entities that we can reach out to and not just our current insurance provider.

1:48:02 I'm hearing you, acting commissioner. And so that leads me to another question. How long have you been working on or having these conversations? How long have you waiting for response? And how long should you wait for response without seeking other avenues? Ms. Tomo, how long have you been working with the current insurance provider? Good morning, Ms. Tomo, Program Assistant for St. Thomas St. John District. We have been working with this for a long time. I could say for a couple of years. And well, the PGU insurance is the insurance that we used and that we sit down with. And then we came to the board to tell them we needed additional insurance for the student athletes.

1:48:47 So we've been not working with them just now. We've been working for them longer than that. And with the insurance for the tackle, it's like no one else wanted to do it. And PGU insurance was like, okay, we got you. So at the end of the day, it wasn't as detailed to what Mr. Richmond provided. So we've been working with him for years. And I think that's why it's important to have these conversations with all the stakeholders, because having these conversations with the IA in St. John, St. Thomas district allows you then to have a clear understanding of what it's needed. We cannot work isolated, and I hope that this issue is resolved quickly and so that our students can be properly insured as they move into different fields of sports and athletic.

1:49:44 Senator Joseph, you're recognized for your point of inquiry. Yeah, point of information, Mr. Chair. Yeah, we're going to hear first Senator Joseph for her point of information, and then we'll go to Senator DeGraff. kindly media recognize senator joseph mike please thank you so much mr chairman um this is a very robust discussion i want to ask mr victor soom a question relative to page five Pertaining to the athletes that were awarded scholarships, do you have Mr. Soom, the denominator?

1:50:34 Because you have, I think it's nine here, athletes. How many students out of the, how many students was a total being considered for academic scholarships? And there's only two colleges here that I see that students were predominantly

awarded scholarships for, and that's Benedict College as well as Monroe College. What is the denominator? Senator, I do not have the amount of scholarships awarded per student.

1:51:14 I believe that the scholarships from my discussion with others, they were partial scholarships, but I do not have the exact amount that each student was awarded to attend those universities. Okay. Mr. Chairman, may I request that the amount each student was awarded to attend in scholarships? You may. You can submit that through the committee. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for your point, for the point of inquiry. Thank you.

1:51:49 You're welcome. Senator DeGraf, you're recognized for your point of information. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just put on the record, like I said, prior to being elected in my first term, I was the president for IAA on St. Thomas, St. John District, and football, the insurance issue is a major concern to me and the equipment because this is a high contact sport we have great young men super strong you know and and i think that's what we need to look out for that miss thoma has been in a fight so she is aware of it i just would like to make sure when you're making the decision to start back football that we don't just do it because we're pressured to do it we do it where we take the the young men into consideration who play in the game you know for their own future and you know so thank you for the time mr chair oh you're welcome and i and i have to agree with you i think um this is very important thank god i guess that we're aware we we haven't had any major injuries. Have we, Acting Commissioner Soames?

1:53:03 Since acquiring this position or coming into this position, I'm not aware of any catastrophic injury as a result of students engaging in tackle football, sir. All right, so I hope that this will soon, we'll find resolution and be able to have our children insured properly. And I think that also the parents should be aware what the policy speaks of and you know what exactly is covered. Speaking in this, the same topic of insurance, Ms. Richard Richmond, I'm sorry, Ms. Richmond, you said in your testimony, you spoke about allocating the necessary funds for because the high cost of insurance.

1:53:51 you also mentioned that are you still waiting some funds according to your testimony um leisha richman from the st thomas st john and the scholastic athletic association um yes senator carrion we are still waiting for allocations um of the monies that were allocated to us in the last budget that was approved i don't have the number of of that bill in front of me right now but we have not been able to receive any of those funds um for our insurance for both of the st thomas st john interscholastic athletic association or the st croix interscholastic athletic association and also the funding in order for us to put in place the our school today program which is the activity schedule and covid tracer which will help everyone in you know in sporting and athletics thank you and you're waiting that funding from who you made a request um our funding source comes through the department of education acting commissioner thank you senator i am just inquiring about that release now i know that the department releases funds on a monthly basis internally but i am getting that information and i should have it to you very very shortly on the status of the release of funds to the ias point of information thank you mr chair act 8365 is a budget bill and that is where the funding for for inter-Ireland travel and for both IAAs were on Ms. Richmond and Ms. Hopsin and the Department of Education and OMB were all copied following the passing of the budget last fiscal

1:55:57 year indicating the act number, the section of the bill, and the amount that was to be released to IA. And to date, those funds have not been released and we're entering the fourth quarter so education was sent a letter twice and releasing those ones to IAA so I mean we have to do better thank you mr. chair thank you senator Saru and that is correct and the amount that was appropriated for the IAA athletic programs was a hundred thousand to be divided equally among both districts and that's just one and also there was a 125 that was provided to the part of education for inter classic sports so there are some funds there that need to be paid out a commissioner this isn't acting commissioner stones I'll wait to respond later as you inquire and receive information from your staff.

1:57:06 Yes, sir. Senator Javon James, you are recognized for your seven minutes. Good morning to the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Good morning, testifiers. My question to the Acting Commissioner. So right now, the Committee on Finance is going through the budget hearings and what have you. Can you speak to any recommendations and conversations regarding the FY 2022 budget when it comes to sports in the territory and making sure that this time around, since we had a pause on sports during COVID-19 during the FY 2021 budget and how we would do better this time around with the additional funding and the recommendations being made to this budget?

1:58:03 Can you speak to those conversations? Thank you, Senator, for the question. I would ask that in the upcoming budget that the initiatives and programs that the dsa the division of sports and athletics is pursuing the ccp2 the coaches certification coach trainer program the sports inventory management system the student athlete roadmap to college and all of those programs and initiatives being pursued by the division of sports analytics be funded through the upcoming budget if they're not funded through the american Rescue Plan, which is essentially CARES Act 3. Understood. But as far as additional funding, because I know we're going to address that during the budget hearings, but I just want to make sure that this time around, when we proceed in the FY 2022 year budget, that we have additional funding and if you guys are

making recommendations. Because we have the VI Sports Commission that is mandated by the Virgin Islands Code. We have the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation. We have the Department of Education who has a division that speaks specifically to sports, which is the athletic director And I want to make sure that we are having these conversations to make sure that we meet the mandates And we have the funding to back it up because the last time we had some hearing somebody told me Oh, we don't have funding so I don't want to hear any excuse this time around so that is why I'm asking a question regarding funding I I understand. I get it. So, again, all of those programs and initiatives, additional staffing for the Division of Sports and Athletics, if they're not requested in the general fund budget, they certainly are being requested in the American Rescue Plan that is being available to the department.

2:00:07 understood and i know that based on the virgin ireland's code some of the edc companies they have an obligation to give back to certain organizations and what have you do you have conversations with the some of the edc companies as far as being able to help our sports in the territory and be able to give back no i i haven't had conversations but i believe the commissioner has had conversations with various companies to um provide funding for activities within the department if i'm not mistaken um the an edc company had donated funding for equipment uh sporting equipment that funding was um donated to the community foundation and then the department was able to access that funding in 2018 to buy equipment so i don't have those conversations but again i know that the commissioner has had conversations in general with EDC companies and others to get donations for the department. Because I am tired of hearing that we need funding we need funding and sometimes we define funding for some of the most ridiculous things in the territory and I'm happy to know that out of the bubble program I think you mentioned that several individuals were able to get a scholarship.

2:01:31 And I want people to really understand the importance of sports. It's more than just kicking or hitting a ball. If you can do something that you love and at the same time have that love or hobby pay for your education, that's very good. And I want to know from Mr. Kalenda. I know the last time he went on bad with me when I asked him about the Virgin Islands Sports Commission. but can you speak to some of the dialogues that the department of education has when it comes to working hand in hand with the virginal sports commission good morning director division sports and athletics as a member of the sports commission i i correspond with the various people on the commission as we prepare right now we're going through the different mandates that have been set forward by the legislature so my being of sports commission is directed as a result of being a part of the department of education and i am intimately involved in all the different discussions going on as we move forward the mandates basically the same thing you told me the last time no problem so nothing new basically transpired so um what is it that you expect in the center i'm trying to give you what you want it's not what i want i want to know the new initiatives that you're working to make sure that when the next school year comes around the children them have something to look forward to this is not what i want what's commission is working on right now sports commission working on the mandate set forward by the by the legislature one minute we're not dealing with the um the schools right now

2:03:25 the sports commission i'm talking about yes but within the powers and duties of the sports commission they are mandated to work with the department of education to make sure that we have certain policies and things in place to make sure that we you know what i don't know you mr kalena i don't know you yeah yeah respect we need to get people on a commission who are serious or to replace the athletic director that's where you want to be moving because we having a real serious conversation here are you giving me i'm talking i'm talking mr chair um mr uh condor allow the the Senator to speak, please.

2:04:09 Sorry, Senator Kerry. If I hurt your ego, cool, but I talking. Time after time, you come to this body, and when we ask you certain questions, like, we don't really reach anywhere. Time. And then you get offended when we ask you questions regarding the youth of the territory. This ain't what Senator James want. We have things mandated in the Virgin Islands Code, and if you feel you don't need to answer to this body, you don't need to be in this position. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time.

2:04:40 If I may, Senator? You're welcome. Acting Commissioner, you're going to respond to the inquiry of Senator James. Yes, thank you, Senator James, for that question. We will be working more closely with the Sports Commission to assist in fulfilling the mandates. We have been very focused at the Division of Sports and Athletics in completing the Honoring a Legend Tournament and actively planning and developing initiatives and programs. I will make it a point to bring in the Sports Commission mandates, keep them in mind, make them important and central to our planning. We are not only planning internally, but we will be expanding, if we haven't already done so to some extent, we will be expanding our planning partners within the department and certainly outside of the department as we gear up and get ready for the upcoming school year. And we will always be mindful and always engage the commission moving forward. So thank you for that, Senator.

- 2:05:55 A quick follow-up by Senator James, I recognize Senator James in my place. Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I just want to let my colleagues know, we fought hard in the 33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands to put the VI Sports Commission in place. We have the 100,000 that have been in the last budget, and then it's in this budget again and it's going to be the next budget. And up to now, no one touched the funds to make sure that the Virgin Islands Sports Commission is operating how it's supposed to be based on the mandates in the virginial school and when we have people coming here and disrespecting this body when we have things funded to help the youth of the territory they don't need to be in a position so i just want to make it very clear you're not doing anything for senator james you're doing it for the youth of the territory thank you mr chair for the time i just would like to acknowledge mr i would like to acknowledge the presence of the senate president donna fred gregory a non-committee member in the district of st thomas um senator alma francis halliger you are uh recognized for your seven minutes and i apologize that um you had a point of inquiry i believe but um we couldn't see or hear you from this side well well thank you for that i i would only hope that our media department pays attention because there are three of us in this chambers that are very active today because this is a very important conversation for us good morning colleagues good morning to the people of the territory good morning to the testifiers um i want to get to one of my questions that have been burning me for the whole time i was sitting here and that was my original point of inquiry I wanted to find out about. In the testimony of the Assistant Commissioner for Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation, he spoke about video footage and lack of profiles being created. And I'm going to sit here and tell you,
- 2:08:06 I have a question. Why am I hearing myself as an echo? It's very distracting. Did somebody hold my time? Let's hold the senator's time. Check and see senator if now it's working better. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. The one thing I want to find out quickly from the the okay i am hearing myself played back and it's very distracting so this has never happened before so i don't know if it's a technical issue that needs to be corrected so can we please stop and get it fixed because this is not conducive for me getting my job done let's take one minute Recess the committee youth sports park and recreation stands and recess for one minute Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 2:14:02 The Committee on Youth Sports, Park, and Recreation is out of recess. Senator Alamo-Francis Eiliger.
- 2:14:32 Good afternoon again, colleagues, testifiers, people of the territory. Before you begin, I just would like to let my colleagues know that there is a slight delay so that we could be aware of that. All right. And be a little bit patient and sometimes allow the time for the response. Go ahead. You're recognized, Senator. Thank you. Good afternoon once again. I want to dive into this combine, this sports combine, and some information that was provided to us. Could somebody please share with me, this \$107,000 for the combine, was that basically spent on the nine students that are listed here? I think eight of them, I see under for Benedict College and one from Charlotte Amali High School for Monroe College. Um, is this where this \$107,000 was spent?
- 2:15:33 Anyone? Good afternoon, Senator Heiliger. The \$107,000 and, um, the \$107,307.48, that was spent on all of the necessary items for the combine. It was not spent on the nine students that got scholarships, but for the entirety of this program, this is the total cost. So all 78 students that participated, this is what that money was spent on, the participation of the 78 students in the combine. Listen to me. Sir, I have a lot of questions. So we're going to have to stick to just quick answers today because I have like 50 questions because y'all have my, you know, you came in peace, but I'm trying to get a peace of mind. Okay. And I'm trying to figure out if we're doing what is in the best interest of the children of this territory. So we're going to have to try to give me some quicker answers. How many children were able to participate in the combine?
- 2:16:46 Per the testimony, 78, Senator. Okay, 78 students total. I also would like to know quickly, you said in this amount that \$4,950 were spent for video footage and live streaming, but yet in the testimony we received from the Assistant Commissioner of Department of Sports, Parks and Rec, he said that they didn't even get enough footage to be able to create viable profiles for some of these students.
- 2:17:20 Now, I was very, very taken back and a little bit upset about that because the purpose of sport combines, a lot of them is not only for drilling but also to gather this footage that some of these students could utilize that footage in order to help them to get scholarships. So why did we spend almost \$5,000 with a company that didn't even understand the process of getting profiles, collecting the data and information of these profiles so that they could create profiles that could potentially benefit some of these children. I almost feel like this was a waste of money.
- 2:17:56 Explain to me what happened there. Good afternoon, Vincent Roberts, Assistant Commissioner of St. Thomas St. John District. One of the issues Senator was that some of the footage that was taken could not be used because of the conditioning of the athletes. So it's not all the footage that was taken you would want to present to a coach. So that happened right off the bat. Secondly, the money was- That you hired, the company, sir, one second. The company that

you hired, were they aware of the procedures what type of footage should be collected in order to create profiles or did you just randomly hire someone that was not fully aware of athletic sports and collecting footage to create profiles because to just pay out money to say you got video footage and then tell me after the fact it was basically useless is not only a waste of my money as a taxpayer but also a waste of the monies and the time of these children that participated in this program because I don't like hearing of situations like this I and when I'm here when I'm hold on when I'm here sitting and listening to this conversation of all this testimony that you guys are sharing with us we're going to do this we're in the process of doing this shoulda coulda woulda but we keep spending a crapload of money why is it to this date that we don't even have something in place to deal with collecting the data and the statistics of all of these children that we keep spending this money on? Why are we still here so far from what you're telling me between the tournament a hundred and forty something thousand, a hundred and seven thousand, but you're sitting here telling me we still here looking for

2:19:48 software to figure out how to keep track and data these kids. Do you think from a logical standpoint that somebody that was elected to be responsible for the people's money, that any of the stuff you're saying makes any logical sense to me I mean let's be real there's a lot of what you're saying to me don't make any sense these are things that should have been already put in place you don't go and create these things and be spitting out this type of money and then at the end of these programs you don't really have nothing to show for it you got a five thousand dollar bill and you don't even got footage I don't understand and then you want to turn around and tell me everybody wants to sit up here and and showboat oh we did this we did that at the end of the day we're doing this for the children of the territory I'm looking at this here a lot of these children that got scholarships Benedict College I'm confused Benedict College at the time weren't they on getting a credit they were on the verge of literally being unaccredited we are training our children to participate and go to division two and three schools.

2:21:00 What are the efforts that we're really focusing on for them to really participate in division one? Could somebody explain that to me? I am sitting here. We're almost trying to train them to be second class. I am not into this and all the monies that we keep spending and putting in. And y'all don't, we have no data for these kids, no video footage, no this, no that. And I'm supposed to sit here and co-sign the kind of madness I'm here listening to y'all tell me today. I am not down for this. If you are, all of you are charged with trying to make sure that the children of these territories have opportunities. And it's nice when you come before me with all of these fancy reports, but I want to see results. I want to hear the benefits. I want to see the documentation as to how it's going to benefit these children, some of them to get the necessary scholarships.

2:21:53 Monroe School is what? a division three explain to me we're training our kids for second class time why are we not putting in money to really help them to get into division one schools and all of these scholarships one college that barely just come up barely come out of probation what is happening here stop coming in this legislature giving me a six for eight i can't even say a six for nine because they almost look the same stop it I want the best for my students I want the best for the people this territory all this fancy conversation but I'm not seeing the end result of it I am not happy about it I heard my time was called thank you senator Carla Joseph you're recognized for a point of inquiry thank you so much Mr. Chairman. This question goes towards in a follow-up to Senator Alma Francis Heilliger's comments relative to the scholarships awarded, the nine scholarships. I wanted to ask the amount of each scholarship, and I did ask that, but I believe Ms. Hobson, you're there? Ms. Lucille Hobson would you be able to tell us the amount each student received who awarded a scholarship?

2:23:30 Good morning, Lucille Hobson, St. Croix Interscholastic Athletic Association. in answer to your question I cannot give you information on all of the students I can give you answers for the students from the district of St. Croix well be so kind to provide that information miss hobson um basically um the students that were provided scholarships to benedict college and before before i'm going to be as quick as possible because i know that your time is limited um to basically give you a little history of the scholarship um i got a call from the coach at benedict college um because um apparently the students had reached out to her and she contacted me because she knows me and she asked me if i know the children you know the children i told her yes and i told her that i think that they would be an asset to her team at which time she asked me if there was video footage i told her no i didn't have any at the time however i recommended her to go to the department of sports park and recreation website because the footage that was done during the combine was still on the site and um she went there and she called me back within a half an hour and told me the ones that she was interested in um we have um touch bates and he got an academic scholarship and he also got a

2:25:24 volleyball and a baseball scholarship um deandre taylor um he got an academic and a volleyball scholarship miss miss habson may i interrupt you the dollar amounts the dollar amounts um for For Taj Bates, he got academic in the amount of \$14,300. \$14,300, uh-huh. Volleyball, \$7,000. Baseball, \$2,000.

- 2:25:56 DeAndre Taylor, he got \$14,300 in academic. \$9,445 in volleyball. Jomari Jacobs um he got the full academic amount however she also gave him monies for volleyball because he's going to play on the volleyball team so he didn't actually need the volleyball scholarship he was going to pay but she still decided to give him some monies toward it uh Hija Sweeney he got 12,000 for volleyball and 11,495 i'm i'm sorry he got 12,000 for volleyball and 11,495 in academic um i don't know if i missed anybody okay um Shallisa Simmons um i'm not seeing her figures here and um Gerson Vidal um i'm not seeing his figures either he got academic and baseball. And then there's Tiana Lake from the educational complex. She got volleyball and softball. And her figures I don't have here in front of me. I can forward you the full information at a later date if you would like me to for those three individuals.
- 2:27:41 Yes, I had asked this question and based on the reports we were under the impression that the Department of Education because they have it in their report that these were the scholarship that they were the actual catalyst for getting these scholarships but it is and that's why I'm asking you for the clarification you and your relationship with these college were able to to advocate for our young people to get these scholarships and get these scholarships for them. Because you gave us the background, Ms. Hobson. You said the lady from Benedict College reached out to you and they saw some of the footage that was still on top of the website, and they used that actually to identify the students that they were awarding the scholarship to. um yes senator um you're correct but um without the footage from the department of sports park and recreation website we wouldn't have been able to um you know get these children the scholarships because if it wasn't on the website um they would not have been able to see the children and they would not have been able to get those scholarships little is much little it may be a little bit but something was done and i really want to commend you as well as sports parks and recreation education mr soma mr somman this is not good this is not good our children is a priority that's where it's at our young people thank you so much mr chair for the leeway yeah that was that was a long leeway but
- 2:29:42 yeah i'm not sure you have a long leeway like that again um senator payne you're recognized for your seven minutes thank you thank you for the time mr chair good afternoon good afternoon to the listening of your audience good afternoon testifiers looking for assistant commissioner i mean acting commissioner soames and also miss richmond um for my own edification, exactly what do our students receive relative to athletic insurance and what's the cap if a child is seriously injured? What's the cap? Yeah, I'll start with Assistant Commissioner Soames and then Ms. Richmond, you can follow up.
- 2:30:46 Thank you, Senator Payne. Based on the current agreement with the department's insurer, Accidental death is \$10,000. Dismemberment site. Accidental medical expense reimbursement is \$20,000. And the aggregate limit is a total of \$50,000, based on the information that we have with our current school insurance provider.
- 2:31:29 I do apologize, but could you repeat us? You had frozen for a while. Could you pay the numbers again, please? So based on our relationship with our current student insurance provider, the benefits and limits are as follows. Accidental death is \$10,000. Dismemberment, sight, hearing, and speech is \$20,000. Accidental medical expense reimbursement is \$20,000. And the aggregate limit is a total of \$50,000. Okay. Yeah, and Ms. Richmond, because I want to ask you, Ms. Richmond, do you think that's anywhere near a number that is actually acceptable as far as injuries for our students, Ms. Richmond? Thank you. Alicia Richmond from the St. Thomas, St. John Interscholastic Athletic Association. And thank you, Senator Payne, for asking that question. um i i don't believe for athletic insurance that it does cover because 50,000 as you know quickly is is is used these days in any type of orthopedic or any type of procedure that has to be done um and let me also i want to make one statement clear um the iaas we work with also So not only the public schools, but the private and parochial schools and the insurance that we're talking about through the Department of Education is their, you know, their PGU, which is good. But then let's also remember that we have private and parochial schools who, you know, procure insurance as well. and if you know if we could get a little more clarity on that because those students are participating as well as public school students so thank you for asking and what type of insurance
- 2:33:32 do you think is needed as far as numbers um i really right now when you look at catastrophic injuries you can't look less than a catastrophic injury these days will take a child you know completely out for all of their years and that it you're you're talking at least a million and and going on beyond that and that's that's the reason why i highly suggest disinsure and read and using them because that's all they do is student athletic insurance and um they would be able to look at our circumstances here and be able to pull the real number and i know from being at sprawl school for so many years and having students who got injured and then having to deal with the student insurance it didn't always flow very easily so um you know it's just been a concern of mine and so i make it you know i'm looking forward to working together with everyone to make sure that we can cover this and cover it well but not only for the public schools but for the private and parochial schools as well thank you and what do you think would be the approximate cost to the student for this type of insurance for the million dollar policy um i do know that dissinger and reed um has uh you know they call it athletic

insurance i can't tell you what it is exactly this year because when dissinger and reed we were working with them to try to get them down here it was about um three four years ago now and then when it didn't happen and we had to give up tackle football because of it um you know i haven't asked them on their current rates but i do know that you know most of their school insurances are usually in addition for athletic insurance you know right around the you know the thirty dollar range for a student okay so we can get million dollar insurance for our students

2:35:44 for an additional thirty dollars as opposed to what we have now yeah i would like to say that that is true i'm not certain if i mean i i can't be held accountable for what you know what they are now because i haven't looked in the last few days but now that someone is hearing it what i've been saying we'll be able to look at it and move forward and could you do me a favor um in your the next meetings that you're supposed to have with the insurance um providers could you include the chair and myself uh so we can be abreast as to what is going on relative to our children and athletics um to insurance ms richmond 30 seconds i'm sorry i thought you were uh directing it to um uh commit uh acting commissioner songs yeah absolutely any kind of information that i can pull together and that i would love to have everybody in attendance so that everybody is aware of where we stand i think it's an important part of our program okay thank you very much for that and um assistant commissioner um somes you mentioned in your testimony that the students were selected by coaches mr chair for me rapper please you may wrap up yeah you said they were selected by coaches physical education department chairpersons and teachers based on the students past performances in various leagues um how many students were chosen from this should be acting Commissioner Soames how many students were chosen from each school because you know I can have to represent the big island of St. John and I don't see any students from Udurakian or St. John

2:37:39 anywhere in the list so I want to know if you have 19 students from each high school that were chosen to be in this program. Assistant Commissioner Soames. thank you thank you senator pain i'm going to uh refer that question to director calendar because he worked intimately with sports parks and recreation um and others in the selection director calendar good afternoon corby calendar director spiritual sports and athletics there were no um criteria relative to the amount of students for school for island the coaches made the selections uh based on who they know were good players or who they knew could uh uh meet the muster so to speak um the the fact that nobody came from udara ken or saint john that would be just a uh a situation for now but we can see that there were kids from the various uh public sorry parochial schools private schools uh as well as the public school system so it's not just uh we're lucky to get X amount from this school X amount from that school it was just who the coaches thought were players that they can work with that were good enough to sleep and they were chosen I mean they had to do a tryout or just stood us who the coaches knew was this was this based on a trial they had to go to somewhere for a trial or just basically the coach knew the person they just contacted them it was more that there was very little trout it I think they had selected like for the other in the legend it was like about 20 that we selected and they paid it down to about 15 so there wasn't much of a trial

2:39:42 position it was basically based on their knowledge of the players and similarly with a combat in a bubble, more students were selected because there were a variety of sports being played at the time. So those that were cut, that was more of a, you might not have the grades to make it, but basically it was once the coaches selected you, once the grades were good enough, were able to come to the comeback okay um i just want the public to know that um from st john we have some exceptional students some exceptional athletes that have passed through st john i knew they were in school over the years and um i actually was about to start a tackle football team we got pads and all that stuff but then insurance stuff came in and but i'm hoping that not miss Richmond and like I said we want to get it cleared up because I will commit to bringing back another flam tackle football team from St. John with St. John young people thank you for the time mr. chair I'll catch you in a second one you're welcome Senator Payne I will have a point inquiry by Senator Saru point is actually a point of information you darken was there and if the responses I do reckon was not there that shows a disconnect that's happening and secondly secondly I am the coach of the CAHS varsity volleyball team and this is my point of information I was never ever contacted to ask what players should be recommended for the bubble so to say coaches selected the players we have a culture sits in the body and I make time so I think that it's important that we come and we tell the truth because if we don't tell the truth we don't know how how we could possibly move forward thank you mr. chair it was it was a point it

2:42:00 was a point of information ask the question to or say something you may okay relative to that she is the coach for CHS volleyball team in our database center sarah is not the coach for chs volleyball team miss uh bernard webb is a coach therefore um for her to state that basically i am lying that's that doesn't sit too well with me besides that the coaches were um asked who the individual players were that they would like to to see fit. Many of the coaches were asked, Sandra Saro, even if she is a coach, she may not have been asked, but that doesn't diminish the fact that many coaches were asked who they thought would be players that could go to the bubble.

- 2:43:13 So, Director, so there was no criteria other than asking coaches to provide names of individuals. So you have a listing of VALA coaches? The Department of Sports Park and Recreation were the ones who were initially involved in getting those names. We got, when we got the names, we did the vetting. Senator Cerber, you have your point of information.
- 2:43:51 Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I just wanted to correct the record for the public not to be adversarial. Ms. Vonnery-Webb is a custodian at CAHS, and they had no qualified coach at the time. We know the AFT rules where the person from the AFT, for payment, you know, there's this convoluted contract process of how they choose coaches. And I made the agreement with the school that I will donate my time. I don't want a stipend because I make enough money. This is volunteer work. And we worked with the students year in, year out. We were able to procure uniforms for them year in, year out. You look at the games. You look at the pictures. I sign on as a coach but for payment purposes the custodian that worked with me that helped that brought water dissolved the stipend instead that is why she's listed as a coach for CAHs but that person on the list never wrote a lineup and does not have the valuable acumen that I had and And I came back and I donated my time to my alma mater to sit here and please semantics this afternoon cannot work, Mr. Chair. Thank you.
- 2:45:12 Senator Johnson, you're recognized for your seven minutes. Good morning and thank you very much, Mr. Chair. a little hat in the Senate here today. Good morning to the people of this territory, good morning to the testifiers, good morning to my colleagues. It's always a beautiful day in the Virgin Islands. Mr. Summes, I greet you in the name of peace. Good afternoon, Senator. And I thank you kindly for coming in the name of piece so we'll try to work out some more piece here i i would like to ask you a question mr som i do the department of education provide transportation for the private schools when we are in a normal circumstance do they bus transportation yes we do sir and and the reason why i asked that question is i i signed a testimony where the children from the private school was not provided the opportunity for transportation through the Department of Education but someone else had to step in. Why was not that provided by the Department of Education?
- 2:46:32 If I'm not mistaken, and I'm going to call Ms. Tomo as well, the department provided transportation for public school students and the IAA provided transportation for our non-public school students when i speak about transportation in this time i talking about airline flights tickets from one island to the next yes and you said that that's exactly and you said that you guys paid for that educate department of education we paid for air transportation for public school students and if i'm not mistaken i paid for transportation for non-public school students well and that's what i'm asking can i have the iaa to respond to that i really want to understand that for a minute what they actually paid for miss hobson i think it is um good morning senator johnson good morning the st croix iaa provided tickets for um the private school um athletes that were participating in the bubble along with some students that had the potential to obtain scholarships but they had graduated um in the year that the pandemic started so they weren't able to do what was necessary to obtain the scholarship and the department of sports park and recreation was kind enough to include them in the bubble and
- 2:48:23 go ahead go ahead yes so um since the department of education was not providing the affair for them i offered to do it since these children were part of interscholastic since who did not provide it for them you say um department of education was providing tickets for the athletes in the public schools yeah they were not providing for the private schools or for the students that had graduated from high school thank you very much i volunteered to purchase to pay for the tickets for the um those athletes thank you very much and mr sums that's that's what i was really trying to ask you about the um the tickets for the students in the private school i know that we provide transportation on the ground and i was trying to figure out why we did not assist and i had to utilize their funds and i i really want to say thank you very much uh miss substance for your connection in assisting our children and then uh leading uh those uh individuals to the era that they needed to go so i definitely want to say thanks for that uh mr sums i don't know johnson sure go right there mr sums if i can have mr mo speak to that it may have something to do with the wording of the legislation so if you will permit me to have mr mo address that mr mo please good afternoon miss thoma bring on to our program assistance and i'm saying john from coming on to this position when you used about the usable tickets from the money that money is for the just for the public schools we cannot we would love to help to assist the private school the political school but we cannot through the bill the legislature bill that is only for the public school so at this time that's how it has been so with the bubble combine that's how i stepped in and for the honoring of the legends thus we partner with our sister sports park and recreation to assist with the private school to be affiliated but we are not at this present time we are not able to use the tickets for the private schools thank you very much for that clarification um mr sums i think this question might be for you or possibly for parks
- 2:50:51 how come track and field at let athletics was not involved in the in the bubble that combine bubble i would defer to the department of sports parks and recreation sir good afternoon renee hansen assistant commissioner sports park recreation st croix initially track and field was invited to the to the table um i if i'm not mistaken i believe track and feel one plan to

start maybe cross country something was coming up where they opted they it seemed like they opted out but they were initially part of the the sports that were included i cannot recollect exactly why they did not enter but they were and what was i have you there miss hanson other than the combine in the bubble do you guys have any other athletic development programs in the making for the students in the near future oh yes we have um several programs upcoming right now we're we're about to launch our summer programs which will be for six weeks but we have an rbi program where we we're on the planning stages we're registering children in softball and baseball to part to participate in the rbi program and then there's a slew of programs that will be launched come august september for multiple in multiple areas so stay tuned thank you very much i'm glad to see that i have some smile on the testifiers at this moment because it was a little tense for a moment there i just have one more question if i may mr chair you may wrap up definitely um miss richmond i i

2:52:47 would like for you to pretty much give me an explanation as to why you were not involved in partaking in the combine and honoring the legend that the question was asked but not for you to answer so if you may I would like to hear your side of the story thank you Alicia Richmond with the st. Thomas st. John interscholastic athletic Association at the time that the first meeting came together we had our president was shane dagans and at that time shane dagans was pulling together the program and putting yeah putting things together mr dagans left island and then through him leaving the island it gave us since we're a volunteer organization we had to find we had to bring our vice president up to our president and then we had so we had a lot of internal things that were going on and i do know and i want to say that they reached out to mr mark daniel who is always a name that is wonderfully associated with the saint thomas st john interscholastic athletic association we love the fact that we have him as part of our organization and he has spoken on many times i do know that sports park and rhett reached out to to mr daniel and asked him for who he thought might be people that might be students excuse me that might want to be in the bubble so i don't want you to think that we weren't involved in the inception we were but because of mr dagans and leaving island with his family for you know personal reasons then we went through a transitional period which made it you know just a little bit difficult to to make all those transactions happen as you heard sports park and rec testify it was a six-week period and with our volunteer organization when you have an upset like that that's coming especially during a covid period it's difficult to get things together so that is that's the reason why but they did reach out to mr daniel and you know we always thank mr daniel for being

2:55:13 you know a person that we can rely on to you know to speak well for us thank you very much for that clarification and thank you very much mr chair for that leeway you're welcome um senator saru you're recognized for your seven minutes thank you um thank you mr chair for the time uh mr sum good afternoon how are you good afternoon senator i am well thank you good so thank you for the conversation that we had recently and i i think that you acknowledge and you probably can't put on record i think that you acknowledge that um the ball was dropped in some areas and and i appreciate your willingness to be open to make changes henceforth so i am not always crazy all the time but you know passion my passion is coming through my pores specifically when it comes to athletics and i um i don't i don't want to i'm not here to chew you out today to be to be frank but i want you to inspect what you expect and if you're overseeing the division of sports and athletics then there needs to be greater accountability and i know the director very well for years but there comes a time where you have to hold people accountable and friendship stops at the door and we need to definitely do what we have to do and the responses of what do you want and you know we we just have to demand more when people are in positions and and miss even a response the semantics earlier miss um i was in color bunny miss tomo could attest that you can't shun people away to

2:57:01 volunteer their time when i sat and said hey i don't want a stipend so for stipend purposes make somebody else to coach but i will continue to coach in my capacity miss tomo is that correct because mr some you wasn't there at the time mr mo are you there mr good good afternoon is that correct program assistant bernal and thomas st john district at the time you are correct senator saru you was i was in the acting director capacity and you was the coach for the cahs varsity volleyball team you gave it over to it was vernerine name at hand but you just volunteered because you had all the expertise yes sanita sarah thank you very much so no need to belabor the issue now question on page four what is what do you mean page page three what do you mean by co-ed volleyball table 1a education you had you had collect volleyball yeah we had boys and girls participating okay in volleyball okay because i know you you listed girls basketball boys basketball but when it came to volleyball it came co-ed so they did the chart was a bit confusing on page four okay on page four um you said the needs of the student athletes who participated in combining a bubble were comprehensively met by dsp unv department of education do we thoroughly understand the needs of that student athlete so here's the concern they went into a bubble and i watched a lot of the footage our athletes were tired they were fatigued and the quality of the footage wasn't good so i commend the attempt but if we understood the needs of the student athlete we would notice an athlete needs to train so does the department

- 2:59:11 have a plan for covert 19 safe training thank you for the question senator and i would agree with you that um the the needs for that particular bubble um were met to some degree and certainly as we move forward and and we partner continue to partner with health and the department of sports parks and recreation we will clearly uh ensure that what is necessary is done with respect to your question and a uh safe training athletic plan uh we are working with the department of health and we're not trying to reinvent the bubble um so to speak uh senator no we don't want to i'm talking about the training component of it playing and competing is one thing but when you go through a rally or even basketball um you know and you start to see stupid fouls taking place they're just tired so when they're tired they lose discipline in the game so what is a training policy like when you have like basketball do you intend to bring three on threes in um are we going to hire a cleaning company to dice um to disinfect the basketball in between i mean um baseball how is what is your training policy look like or have you cultivated or come up with a cover 19 training policy overall or just for a future combine do you mean like when school restarts is that what you're referring to senator overall yeah because we're talking about having tournaments and that's the next thing because we're having tournaments in the middle of other seasons for sports and i i noticed the overlap and the conflict like having a a tournament for i think baseball in the middle of basketball in the middle of the volleyball season but i mean we we're talking and we're boasting on bubbles and tournaments but you look good in tournaments and bubbles only as is a direct result of training so i don't know if you understand a training component what is a training policy coven 19 have you so go ahead so as we as we begin to ramp up and and prepare for the upcoming school year uh the division of sports and athletics is is developing a policy and we're working with health on this policy and as i was saying there is there is no need for us to reinvent
- 3:01:36 the bubble our sister agency sports park and recreation has a policy that speaks to training so we are looking at that policy working with the department of health specifically to modify if you will and adapt that policy for education as school reopens for the um 2021 2022 school year we hope to complete this process by july 15th 30 seconds mr sum no i hear you right and you and i we're gonna work together but you had a response that you're working on it and that you're gonna work with spr and i'm going back to accountability again you have had an athletic director sitting in a position for about two years do you not think that should have already been done by your staff but you don't have to answer that because we don't want to publicly admonish but those are things that should not be coming up but he should have given you a draft and said we met at these five times this is the final something mr sam you answering everything for me and i just want you to hold people accountable mr chair may conclude quickly um and so education has the infrastructure to promote sports um and when i say the infrastructure the personnel infrastructure spr would have the physical facilities for you to playing now the going back to the needs of the athlete has the department of education um made every high school counselor aware of what is mandated by the ncaa clearinghouse for all athletes because we are sending athletes to colleges that they have never visited and I equate that to signing a mortgage for a house you have never seen and then when our athletes return home we want to know what happened because we send them in some far-off place without the proper resources we don't know the support system I mean if a school wants you they send you on a recruiting
- 3:03:47 trip so beside all of that how what does the infrastructure look like as far as personnel and making high school counselors aware of the NCAA clearinghouse process recruiting trips where your parent goes the player stays with the team the parent stays someplace else they take you around the campus to see the majors then you decide and then you sign off on your letter of intent. Are we doing that level of training or will we continue to assign children in the middle of summer to go to school in the fall? Senator, I got you. I hear you. I can't take responsibility from things from the past. But I can't say moving forward that as we have developed, and this is a done plan this is a done deal as we develop the um as we have developed the student athlete roadmap to college we'll be doing exactly that we'll be meeting with parents coaches guidance counselors and school administrators to talk them through to explain to them to help them plan the college admissions process and the ncaa eligibility process and this is not just something in writing senator this is something where the staff of the department of the division of sports analytics we're actually going out to schools to meet students we're meeting students parents coaches guidance counselors in pauston and via any online mechanism mechanism well it's not just giving a piece of paper and saying oh here's a road map here's a planning guide but sitting down with them one-to-one or in small groups and actually walking them through the steps this has not been done before i'm not certain that our counselors understand the difference between athletic scholarships and academic scholarships so clearly training is needed and we are prepared to do so and do so robustly with our guidance counselors our school coaches our parents and our student athletes and our school administrators so i'm done now and i want the chair to to give me an eye
- 3:05:51 but so you need to have need to make sure that your athletic director does his job and lead the charge thank you mr. chair for the time thank you senator saru and let's move right along senator senate president donna fred gregory you recognize for seven minutes thank you mr. chair so I'm gonna take the conversation in a little different direction and only because I have some perspective of what sports health, etc. looks like in our schools and I am indeed concerned about what it truly looks like. So let me ask you very quickly, we know that we have the Department of Education, the Commissioner's

Office is a state agency of education and then you have two local education agencies which are the St. Croix District and the St. Thomas St. John District, correct? Two LEAs and one SEA.

3:07:01 Okay. Yes, ma'am. So, I am a bit surprised that we have no one here from our districts because we are talking about students and our State Office of Education is responsible for policy, right? So, let me find out from you. Do we have a coordinator of health and, what is it, health and athletics or sports coordinator on the district level? Levels, S, in each LEA.

3:07:40 In the St. Croix district, we have a coordinator for health and physical education. In the St. Thomas district, we do not, ma'am. Okay, so we do not have a coordinator for athletics or health and physical education in the St. Thomas, St. John district, but we have one in the St. Croix district. Y'all don't see nothing wrong with that? And what is the reason for that? And we're working. So what prevents us from filling that position? What is the issue? So I'm going to start there, because I want to bring it all the way up to where we are today.

3:08:21 Because we are having conversations about commingling Department of Education and Department of Sports Parks and Recreation. And I think that the truth is getting lost in how things should really look. Not how it is, how it should look. We've made a lot of changes, and these changes that we've made are impacting our children. So who is looking after the children's athletic matters in the St. Thomas, St. John District? Because it can't be the state. So, Commissioner, I'm sorry.

3:08:55 Senator President, if I may, when I came on board, there was no coordinator in the St. Thomas, St. John District. I didn't ask you where you come on board. I just asked you one question. If I may. No, that's you and my time. Who is looking after the athletic matters in the Department of Education, in the LEA of St. Thomas, St. John District? And for the sake of the public, does the local education agency, which is supervised by the superintendent of schools?

3:09:28 in the absence of a coordinator ma'am that would fall on the superintendent and the district director for curriculum and instruction so our children have no focus on health and physical education this is why our students are only good enough to go to benedict college So, I have to agree with my colleague that spoke a few hours, I guess, because it seems like I've been here forever. Before me, with regards to the issue at Bendigate College, when are we going to fill that position?

3:10:10 We have a state director of sports. That's what we need to be focusing on here in this territory. Before we begin to talk about health and athletic education, we're talking about sports. We have to talk about that first and then we get to sports. Our children are at a disadvantage. So help me, Mr. Assistant Commissioner Sooms. I am having a very hard time with this discussion because we do not order things properly.

3:10:40 That's why we don't get anything right. may i senator sure okay so the st thomas and john superintendent i had this very same discussion the position uh my understanding is it was zero funded and needs to be recreated because it is extremely important position so that is where you know i was zero funded you know i was deep zero It was refunded from the MAP administration when they hired a state director and not focusing on the matters that reflect the district.

3:11:20 We are talking about students. We are not talking about policy. That's the issue. And when we come on board and we talk about changing course, we continue on the same path. We're doing the same thing. It's wrong. It's wrong. I ain't running for nothing. I hear an eye over there. I am straight up, I am passionate about these colleagues because I'm passionate about these colleagues because I've been there and I know what it should look like and I've listened to the conversation all day and nobody is talking about, so how do we address the issues within our schools to get our students to become the athletes that they should be? Where is that? Where is that discussion?

3:12:07 where is that discussion in all of this discussion miss um habson miss habson are you still there you are the coordinator for the st croix district correct good afternoon senator no i am not who's the coordinator you know coordinator no more no i am a retired person the coordinator is miss ophelia williams jackson oh miss jackson okay so that's who's the coordinator so we need to know when we're gonna get coordinated i ain't getting into all the bubble and all them different things i need to know when we're gonna focus on the health and the physical education of our students so then they could be in turn become good athletes you can't have one without the other is assume this is so your hair with us you're frozen oh i'm frozen 30 seconds can you repeat will you go hear me i can hear you no i wasn't i was asking so when are we going to make a commitment to right this wrong that's happening in this district to the students in this district because you know a few months ago in the 33rd legislature we had to fight for a special education director on the district level and i am tired of fighting for positions that belong to the district time so the students can get the services that they need i should we shouldn't be having this discussion you all should should be the ones passionate about that so when I know that the superintendent and we are passionate about this senator we are very passionate about this achievement is the most important thing that we do the superintendent is working to recreate the position so that we can have it

- 3:14:11 filled as soon as possible. I cannot give you a specific timeline because you are well aware. When you come down for your budget hearing, make sure it's created. When you come down for your budget hearing, make sure it is in fact created because education is one of the entities that do not have to go through the division of personnel to create positions. and i know that the position was deleted in a previous administration to create some state office position which is wrong so we're sitting here asking the state director why this and this ain't happening he has no one to support him in the district and this is why the st thomas st john district students are getting left behind they're getting left behind and i am here to report to you uh assistant commission assume that your responsibility as the assistant commissioner is not only to one district it is a responsibility to the territory so we need to address this okay yeah let me finish let me finish i know that my time has been cut so i need to wrap up um we talk about footage we talk about all kind of things here today all kind of thing except what matters what matters we need to start it from the right place okay otherwise our athletes will continue to go to benedict college and i'm here to tell you that i'm passionate about this because two of my children my son went from charlotte amali high he went from auntie school but a charlotte amali high school coach myron corbett god rest his soul in peace but for him okay my son got a five-year scholarship to a division one college in New York and play division one ball and my other son my youngest son also got a four-year scholarship to play division one ball so we we could do better than this and not to know little school I had people that came here from gosh I forgot the name of St. Joseph's College St. Joseph University in
- 3:16:28 Philadelphia to watch my son and the other students that were here, well we can't have that. We have to have people from Benedict coming to watch our children. No, we got to do better than this and we feel that it's okay and then you have the information for one district in the report. No, we got to do better than this, okay? So I'm gonna, I don't have any whole host of questions other than we need to see health and physical education being a focus in our schools and the st thomas st john district needs a coordinator asap we cannot continue on long this track that we are on thank you for the time mr chair you are you're welcome madam president point of information by senator saru thank you thank you mr chen i wanted to just give a little a little more clarity and and the structure is also an issue but i am in no way exaggerating my or taking back my comments on the ad but in every district and it's necessary mr corbett and may he rest in peace my basketball coach and other coaches went above and beyond but high schools need to be assigned athletic directors that are separate from chairpersons because when you have a chairperson managing a department dealing with lesson plans and everything else and then we expect them to stay after school and stay into the night and then still go home and grade papers and assume their teaching responsibilities and then show up the next day to school it's impossible but if you have an athletic director that's responsible for all of that um player profiles equipment and then they answer to somebody in a district level that also work so we have to look at the structure of athletics within education um and then the pe and health coordinator is something separate like how you have a math coordinator a science coordinator that's over the curriculum i think that the department mandates a master's degree for those positions and i don't think that we have many pe teachers with master's degrees and i think that's why the position um tends to remain vacant for some time as well mr some i mean assistant commissioner some correct me if i'm wrong but the p and health coordinator deals with curriculum and dealing with the health teachers pe teachers that is totally different from athletics so maybe we could look at the structure of athletics and education and assign athletic directors to schools because you know you're not going to find a mr davis and a mr corbett who will sit in a gym from six in the morning till midnight that's that's rare but if you
- 3:19:19 create a structure processes exceed people so i think if we change the process and the structure i think mr summer giving you a little tidbits here maybe if you go back and revisit that i think that would also help the structure of athletics and then of course assigning deputies too because last administration deputies were assigned over athletics the commissioner the present commissioner was a deputy at the time assigned um to athletics and i don't think you have a deputy commissioner now in the st thomas st john district over athletics so there's so many little loopholes that we need to fix thank you mr chair so if i i i may mr chairman in in response and support to the senator's position uh senator soro is exactly correct the pe coordinators pe and health coordinators focus on curriculum and instruction within the schools and senator you should note based on our previous discussion that we are pursuing athletic directors in the four high schools so that is something that we hope to fund through our american rescue plan because we realize the importance as you had discussed about the need for these positions in our high schools thank you thank you senator saru for your point of information and commissioner acting commissioner somes for clarifying that clearly i agree with the senator we need to revisit the structure and come up with a structure that works and benefits firstly the students and of course the department so the work processes could be much easier we have identified there are clearly some gaps within the department education when it comes to the area of athletics and sports so I look forward to hearing some of those recommendations I'm glad to hear about the athletic director for the high school so that's that's a good start um so if I'm understanding correctly acting Commissioner there is no one at a district level that deals with athletics no okay individual schools deal with athletics coaches but there's no there's no singular person at any of the districts that deals with athletics but even in

the individual

- 3:21:43 schools i understand um i'm clearly gonna put my time on even in the schools there there's there seems to be some gaps within the schools who certifies or selects the coaches for the schools i'm going to have director calendar respond to that director calendar good afternoon director calendar different sports and athletics uh the principals are the ones who actually select the coaches so the principles are the ones selecting the coaches and what are the criterias um for this selection process based on what i met in place when i came on board uh it was uh who they actually knew were well-versed in a particular sport i didn't i haven't seen any documentation relative to you must have a you must have b and so on you know it's just uh if they knew somebody that were well were well versed in a particular sport you know they would hire them so it's just a matter of if i'm a principal and i just want to select anybody who has an interest to be a coach or I could select my cousin or select this teacher and and that's it there's no try but there's no type of criteria established for the selection of the coaches in the school level based on what I met in place no okay I'm hearing you based on what you met in place and
- 3:23:31 and how long have you come aboard? About 20 months now. Okay, so almost two years. So have you started to make any changes with that regard? Yeah. Because if you met something in place that is not working, you know, it's your responsibility then to implement the changes and fill in those gaps and make sure there's policies, procedures, criteria is in place so you know it could function properly so share with me what what what have you done with with reference to this well we we are actually putting together uh what we call the coach the coaches program which is um even if a principal hired somebody who were who were that well worth in the given sport first of all they had to pass the certificate online certification program by uh that was that's administered by the national federation of high school athletics and secondly the culture coaches program is where we we get some veteran coaches in given sports that could teach the individual nuances of the particular sport to some of the younger coaches some of the individuals who aren't as qualified to coach as the veteran coaches so the idea is to ensure that all of the coaches uh have the have the knowledge to teach our our students director uh calendar um have you done a survey how many coaches we have in each district i have a list that i can pull up
- 3:25:20 quite a bit you don't know exactly i have the list i have a list and do you know of those coaches that you have which ones are certified we have the list of certified coaches yes okay so you so you're aware which ones are not certified um for for you to coach in our system you have to be certified you have to be certified Okay, um, I think Commissioner Soames.
- 3:25:56 Yes, sir. Yeah. Do you believe that you need then someone in athletics at the district level within the department? Um, yes. Yes, and as I had indicated before, the Division of Sports and Athletics has included in their request from the American Rescue Plan AD positions at all four high schools in the territory. yes i heard that but do you need a coordinator at a district level because that's um a da for the high schools do you need someone then yes at a district level um to assist in the coordination yes yes the short answer is yes okay has that been submitted also or what's the plan with regards to that Sir, that is a request that would come from the districts directly.
- 3:27:06 As the Senate president had pointed out, in the past, deputy superintendents, at least in this district, St. Thomas St. John District, were responsible for sports and athletics. So I would respectfully, I would leave that to the superintendents to make that decision and not have the state make that decision for superintendents. I would strongly recommend that they pursue that, but ultimately the decision should be theirs, in all fairness. I hear what you're saying, but at a state level, as a commissioner or the head of the department, if you recognize that at a district level there is a need and there is a gap because of the absence of this position and someone with the training to be able to then really develop and expand the mandate that you have within this area, then that isn't then at state level then a responsibility to ensure that these positions are filled or created yes the state would assist the districts in creating and filling the position but clearly from what we've gathered here so far we we have a gap and we need to really fill these gaps to ensure then um time because we're doing a disservice to our children by not having the qualified people in these positions and haven't these positions filled so i think it's very important that we address this matter um at a district level um from what i've been hearing so um and and of course there are some gaps i also have some other questions with regards to um which you mentioned in your testimony um i see that uh there's a student athlete a road map to college that was created or
- 3:28:58 it's in the final planning stage uh do you have a timeline when this will be completed the the planning for the student athlete robot the college that that physical document is completed it is currently being vetted so we have a physical document that is complete and under review the next step once it once it receives approval the next step is now to provide training to our staff and so as school reopens on august the 9th the professional staff come in the week before we will meet with all coaches all pe teachers the health and physical education coordinator to do exactly that to discuss the initiatives and programs under the dsa and to provide professional development and training with particular emphasis on the student athlete road to roadmap to college and the um the pandemic training policy for school athletes okay acting

commissioner um that's that's good that's moving in the right direction you're waiting approval from who who is vetting who is vetting um what you guys have planned who is vetting this guy well the plan will get vetting from several individuals the leadership team at the department legal council to make sure that we are in compliance with any federal or local statute or regulation definitely uh vetting from the superintendents uh and certainly the final approval will come from the commissioner of education and how long do you think this process of vetting and approval

3:30:44 will take um i foresee that this process should be done uh realistically and practically by the end of this month sir okay so once it's been approved um this will be implemented when after training with all of the stakeholders which would be you know coaches health and physical education teachers guidance counselors especially and school administrators we plan to do that the week before school reopens for students right now with regards to the student athlete tracking system I understand that you all have begun using the Power School management information system to be able to identify these athletes.

3:31:37 Is that correct? Yes, sir. We have within the Power School a special programs function where student athletes can be identified. And if I may, sir, the various school coaches would provide that information to the registrar or systems analysts in their school who would then input that information onto the power school system. That's the first step.

3:32:04 The next step will then be to use software and extremely sophisticated software like cybersports to begin collecting statistics. So it is a two-step process. One step, the first step in the process already exists, which is the special programs function under PowerSchool. The second step, which will then take us to getting statistics for game play, is something that we are working on. But we are now ready to fully implement student-athlete identification in PowerSchool. Great. Have you already identified these athletes then? Are they in the system?

3:32:47 No, they're not because we're starting a new school year come August the 9th, so at that point after school settles and sports begin with the approval of the Department of Health, we will then at that point at the beginning of the school year begin to identify student athletes in grades 7 through 12 and input that information in our power school system. understand there's no comprehensive statistics statistical database right now um but you guys are pursuing that software um have you guys identified the software um we have identified one type of software known as cyber sports there are others that we are researching what is important is that the information that is obtained in power school can be uploaded to to whatever software so that we have a seamless system.

3:33:48 Okay, well that's some good also, moving in the right direction. So that's some good news. Hopefully you guys will identify that software and be able to purchase it soon so that we could have that record and statistics of our students. Now in regards to the pandemic training policy for schools athletics, I don't see any timeline with regards to this. I'm sorry for the interruption, so please continue as a deadline for policy completion is July 15 2021 for vetting and approval implementation for 2021 to 2022 school year.

3:34:31 So it's still is this currently in a developing process? Yes, it is. It is near completion. As I indicated before, we are not going to be attempting to start the process from scratch. It already exists in the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation. We are working with the Department of Health and will be working with the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation to modify their proposal to the school environment or the school setting. So this is a task we believe can easily be completed. We already have started this work because the Division of Sports and Athletics has a sport policy plan so it is a it is a it is now a situation where we marry elements of these divisions sport sport plan sports activities and plans with the pandemic training policy for school so this is this is easy work in terms of having started it looking at other models putting it together for specifically for the school environment and then again providing training at the start of the school year for coaches, P.E. and health teachers, and others.

3:35:44 Good. We're going to quickly go into a three-minute second round. If my colleagues don't need it, they don't need to use it. Senator Javon James, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you so much. And I must admit that today's a great day in the Virgin Islands, man. regardless of what transpired earlier today in the hearing but what I'm a little bit disappointed about today as I go to the testimony I must admit that there was a well put together testimony by the acting Commissioner but the notice says that we are receiving an update from the Department of Education's Division of Sports and Athletics regarding student athletic development programs but it focused the testimony focused more on the combining a bubble and honoring the legends we didn't really receive an update from the Department of Education's Division of Sports and Athletics so I really wish that the director came down with a testimony because from how I'm hearing it seems like the Acting Commissioner knows everything and is dealing with everything but i'm not here to to bash anybody but if we're gonna have a hearing we need to stick to what the hearing is about and today we should be receiving an update from the department of education's division of sports and athletics when you go on the website for the department of education you go to it's the part that speaks to sports and athletics and there isn't much You don't have any objectives, no goals, no updates.

- 3:37:28 You just have the different forms to fill out for the coaches, and that's it. So you don't have any idea what goes on in that specific division. So I know it's not hard to find, but through the chair, I would like to get the job description of the director of athletics, sports and athletics in the territory. We as a body need to find out what's really going on within that division because like the good Senate president said, it's more about the health aspect of it and getting them the scholarships. Because in this territory, we like to say that education, education, and education, but if we do it right by running this division, we could have a lot of our students going to college for nearly free.
- 3:38:14 And I'm not saying that the department is not doing that. I'm just saying that it could have been better. And as far as receiving an update, I don't want to sound like a broken record, but Title III of the Virgin Islands Code, Section 321 speaks to sporting activities within the school system, and that's under the Virgin Islands Sports Commission. So yes, we could sit here and play games, but if we do exactly what is mandated here, and we have the necessary conversations, we would have been receiving a true update here today regarding what's going on within the division.
- 3:38:50 I'm not going to ask any questions, I just need to find out one last thing from the acting commissioner. As far as maintaining accurate records of teams and the statistics, how do we go about doing that? Where can we find that information? Which company we hired to make sure at the end of the day if we want to find an individual's record is there, it's maintained, and it's attainable, or we can retrieve it, accessible? How do you go?
- 3:39:19 you very much senator james um i do appreciate your line of questioning today uh we value your input because you're quite experienced along these lines so we value your contribution with respect to your specific question um as i indicated to the chairman um beginning next school year after we have had we had an opportunity let me backtrack and i i know i tend to be long-winded forgive me we had an opportunity to meet with the district systems analysts and a systems analyst on a district system analyst in st thomas and one on st croix so they provided guidance on how this can be done and we will in turn provide guidance to coaches in particular and health and pe teachers that as they develop their teams for the new school year they have to transmit that information they have to submit that information to registrars or systems analysts at their schools who will then put that information in our power school system this is the first step senator so if we are called for example um in december of next year for a hearing before this committee we can automatically generate a list of all student athletes at johnny twilson school all student athletes at krankine school and the sports by grade level further the next step that's the first step the next step in this process will be to identify and acquire software that as these students engage in game play statistics and other information are generated this software needs to be compatible with our power school system so that we can be able to upload and i'm no technician here but i'm a quick learner this information needs to be compatible with our power school system so that it can upload to whatever software the department ultimately decides to acquire so we will be able to not only generate list of student athletes but also statistical information by athlete by school mr chair i just want to end by saying i hope nothing happens overnight and i understand that so we're understanding people in this body but i just want to make sure that when the governor speaks about digitizing government that we can one day actually reach to that end goal because one of these days I hope that we could just go on a phone look at an app and look up our high school at least and look up the statistics and guess what it will make it easier for those on the US mainland to
- 3:41:43 find the information so they don't have to go to a director of sports analytics who is not responding to us as he should but get rid of the red tape data technology thank you mr. chair for the time you're welcome and that's the And I think that's why we're here. Senator Carla Joseph, you're recognized for three minutes. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.
- 3:42:14 As this is our final round, I presume, I wanted to ask you, Ms. Assistant Director, well, Director Kenneth Kirby Callenda for the Division of Sports and Athletics for the Department of Education. What is your understanding of the objectives of the Division of Sports and Athletics? What is the objectives? Because objectives should be tied directly to the goals. OK, so what are the objectives?
- 3:42:52 Because I know the assistant or the acting commissioner, Victor Som, you mentioned in your testimony, you know, about goals when you were elaborating to the chairman about the sports policy plan. Plans have objectives and goals. So tell me what are the objectives and the goals? Because then we just turn in wheels and say a whole bunch of stuff, and we don't get any type of goals, and our outcomes becomes what it is, and we're looking at. And then you have another department who just jumps in, Take the lead and take over and get, even though it isn't the best result, getting something rather than nothing. So tell me what the objectives are. Kindly.
- 3:43:50 Good afternoon. Corby Callender, Division of Sports and Athletics. The objectives and goals of this position, Director of Sports and Athletics, step from the job description. One minute. And it's basically. I'm sorry. Continue. You're good. Continue.

- 3:44:17 Okay. Okay, and it's basically provide policies and procedures that will enable our student athletes to progress to the next level. And that's the whole purpose of everything that we do, putting in different situations that would enable our student athletes to move on to the next level. And that next level is? 30 seconds. Well, it would depend- Because that's your outcome. For the junior varsity, the next level is varsity. For the varsity athlete, the next level is on to college. With scholarships?
- 3:44:59 To accredited school. It doesn't state scholarship. If we could get scholarships, that is the ultimate. is to put them in position an example of that is simply by assisting them with the SATs ensure that they do the SATs ensure that they take their core core courses in time because for if you take your if you don't have your 10 core courses by the end of the junior season for example you can't you're not going to be able to make the required courses by the end of your senior season. So by us doing something like the roadmap to college, it informs them that they have to do XYZ at an appropriate time. Now saying all of that, maybe they get a scholarship, maybe not. But the thing is we have to prepare them to be in a position to get the scholarships. Okay, thank you. I just want make a real strong comment here because if you have a plan your plan and you listed your your position job description and duties when you put together a plan you have to have objectives goals right and you have to have them measurable you would say 60 percent of the students who are participating will have a scholarship to x y and z or they will complete you have to have a numerative you call it quantitative okay it has to have a goal and objective acting commissioner victor solma i know you know what the the language i'm speaking to because it has to be measurable and you have to have in place benchmarks to meet those goals and if we don't have those kind of plan in place guess what we're doing to ourselves and our future we're failing them we're failing them we're not challenging them to meet those potential because we don't
- 3:47:17 have any measurable goals in our plan thank you so much mr chairman for the leeway you're welcome senator senator if i may yes sir quickly um thank you senator joseph for your commentary it is uh received um we do have plans but but keep in mind plans are not static plans are living and they change depending upon situations and and covet has thrown a wrench in plans and we we're still continuing to perform and progress but i i want you to know that we have heard you um we have received your message and we're going to continue to move forward so So thank you for that, ma'am.
- 3:48:03 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for being commissioner because I am very, I really, when you put together a plan and you have those outcomes and you have them measurable, that's what you're trying to achieve, some quantitative number. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for the leeway. Thank you so much, Acting Commissioner.
- 3:48:35 You're welcome. Senator DeGraf, you're recognized for your three minutes. Senator Alma Francis-Halliger, you're recognized for your three minutes. Good afternoon again. I come in peace. Good afternoon. But I want to ask a question quickly. Um, when it came to the tournament, what exactly did the students get out of it, even with the combine?
- 3:49:10 What exactly, as it relates to potential recruitment and their portfolios, did they benefit from participating? Anything tangible that they can show for their participation in either the combine or the tournaments? i would defer to director calendar here thank you good afternoon um the purpose of the honor and religion tournament was to get the students back out playing um the purpose of the combine was more to get them out to start training because the combine was the first of any activity that they actually did in about a year. So I think Senator Saro was talking about the fact that they weren't they were out of shape well considering the fact that they didn't play any sport over the past seven that is not that is not the direction i was going into but thank you so much for your thought process um excuse me um uh senator uh francis I would just like to advise Director Condor that when addressing the senator, ensure that he mentioned Senator Saru. Thank you.
- 3:50:51 Okay. I wanted to ask, at what point did the light bulb go off? Okay, do I get additional time for that brief interruption? I am savoring every minute of my three minutes. Yes, go ahead. Thank you. At what point did the light bulb go off in the Department of Education that they needed to start tracking our athletes in regards to collecting data and potentially inputting information, utilizing software? Because from, I guess, from a technical standpoint, from someone that deals with computers and technology and know the advent of all the information and data processing software that has been available in the 21st century. At what point did the light bulb go off in you guys' head to say that now, in 2021, is when this stuff needs to be done?
- 3:51:53 Senator, if I may, respectfully, I don't think the light bulb was ever turned off. I think the light bulb was always on. But certainly, and I'm not making excuses, we didn't, you know. You just let it, you just let the light stay on and just burn and burn and burn and nobody did anything. That's not true, Senator. That's not true. That's what I'm trying to ascertain because the entire testimony that I'm hearing today is everything that you're going to do. It's not done. So if the light bulb was already on, I'm trying to understand why some of these things were not done 5, 10, 15 years ago when technology like this and software like this existed. so senator respectfully i i can't account for what happened 10 to 15 years ago i was someplace else since coming on board we have the coach the coaches program where coaches are certified that's been

happening for several years that's not something new that's been happening for several years the fact that we have power school and a special function within power school to identify student athletes again that is not something new that's something that some schools were doing and some schools weren't doing the division of sports analytics is now saying that has to be done across the board that has to be something that is universal and not just at cancrine school or after richard school but every school that has sports programs needs to begin to identify those students within power school so that's not something again that is new that's something that has existed it hasn't taken advantage it hasn't been taken advantage of basically what you're saying there was no collaboration across the board when it came to the importance of identifying when it came to our student athletes but it was just done periodically or individually depending on who might have run a particular school

3:53:52 as opposed to it being a standard policy across throughout the department of education is that what you're saying and exactly and that is where the division of sports analytics law comes in as a state agency that is required for policy and monitoring policy that is where we now come in to say look everybody got to do this so basically we dropped the ball and we're now trying to clean up the mess i i would disagree with that senator um i don't think so the ball wasn't the ball I wasn't dropped. See, see, the reason why I am asking these questions is because as a senator, a lot of things that I'm hearing today confuses me. I'm hearing coulda, woulda, shoulda, and that's all I keep hearing. Today marks five months since I got elected to office. And I can honestly sit here and the continuous tone and the continuous message that I'm hearing from many testifiers is I wasn't here. So why take on a job that you didn't even bother to know what your predecessor was doing or not doing, because it's an easy way to say that it wasn't my responsibility. I can't account for other people. The point is, some of you are in these positions now. These are the issues that are happening now. These are the things that need to be fixed now. And granted, I'm going to appreciate whatever efforts is happening now, but in order for me to quantify what the mistakes were so that they don't happen again, I need to know why certain decisions were not made. And even as a leader or someone in charge of these divisions, I would want to hope that you and others would want to know why it wasn't done to make sure we do not repeat history. We have a habit in this territory of when people leave positions, guess what? Their ideas and their plans leave with them. Or if a new administration comes in and they might not like this person or that person, those plans and ideas go through the window like they never happen. I am trying to understand, is there a way or a handbook that is left behind that is passed on?

3:56:07 And I'm just saying this figuratively, if one doesn't exist, so that people could continue the work to make sure that our children are not short-changed based on politics and personalities. That is my concern here today. And you could answer the senator on my time, acting commissioner. Thank you, Senator Francis Heiliger. May I, sir?

3:56:35 Yes, you may. So, in response to the senator's question, that bridge is being built now. Those policies and those plans for continuance are being built now. They weren't built before. And I must say that the DSA is a relatively new creation compared to other divisions within the department. So, as we move forward, and we're constantly moving forward and learning from the mistakes, and I'm not saying that those that came before me that we're not aware of what their positions and what their plans are. All I'm saying is that I am not in a position to take responsibility for mistakes of the past. I am here to learn from those mistakes and move forward. And as we move forward, everything that we're doing is documented as a bridge so that when I retire at the end of next year, whoever succeeds me has something from which to follow.

3:57:32 That's all I'm saying. Thank you. Senator Payne, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that five minutes. I've been at large. Ms. Richmond and Ms. Hobson, we live in a territory with at least close to about a hundred crystal clear beaches and I don't feel there isn't any reason why we can't produce world-class swimmers in the Virgin Islands but in large measure a concentrated effort to extend water sports is actually relegated to private schools and when i look at a list of sports highlighted from the testimonials from either iaa be it saint thomas or saint john i don't see anything such as swimming sailing or other water sports um why is that um miss richmond you can answer first and then miss hobson you can follow up um thank you uh leisha richmond st thomas st john interscholastic athletic association thank you senator payne for that question we as the i am the st thomas st john district we have been actively trying to work with the um the swimming association so that we could work you know by using the pool because all most of all of the swimming competitions you know are done in pools of you know that are a certain set and you know not unfortunately on our beaches

3:59:20 so that is um we have been working with them trying to get them to give us times that we would be able to then offer the program and then each one of the schools since we we offer the promoters of swimming we can do swimming um we get we can do tennis and the problem that we have right now on the in the district of st thomas and st john is is the minimal numbers of venues that we have for places um to have these different activities archery we can do as well too we we can we can represent as a matter of fact one thing that might even be interesting to you is we can put forth marching band

competitions it is part of what we do and what we can do so the whole thing is making sure that we have the places that we can do it and that we have the people who understand what it is that we do which is 30 seconds and so that way um you know we can we have been moving forward so thank you miss hobson yes good afternoon um lucille hobson um senator payne um one of the main reasons i'm going to say part of what this richmond said it's true um it's something that we have looked into however in terms of our sports basically time um are paid by the coaches are paid by the department of education or the private school pays the coaches and if coaches are not being paid they do not coach the sports and i'll give you an example for interscholastic on saint croix we had bowling included we had chess and those coaches were paid from the school whether it was raised funds that they raised or however they were able to pay the coaches because it was not a negotiated sport between

4:01:36 the department of education and the aft so once coaches feel that they're not going to be paid they are not willing to code some of the sports because we have other sports as she mentioned archery we were looking into archery on st croix we have tennis we have golf different things like that it's not just a basic sport but once it's not negotiated with the aft and the department of education it is difficult to find people to coach the sports because i would like to see beach volleyball also included in there okay so apparently the problem is funding um well i wouldn't say so i guess you could say funding in a sense yes or for when the aft and the department of education goes back to the table that they could add these sports to um the table okay so i'm i'm 100 sure that the acting commissioner is listening and i'm sure after the meeting y'all will have a follow-up meeting with him and he's given his word today that he's committed to ensuring that we add swimming sports and sailing and stuff to the curriculum so this way they can have coaches that can actually be paid through the department of education to see that these sports come to fruition to include beach volleyball so you are responsible for having beach volleyball come to the virgin islands today based on the word of the acting commissioner soames right commissioner thanks for the time uh mr chair and i hear you senator if i may yes you may um i just wanted to add that um what senator payne said is really good especially about sailing because until his school won the um sailing national championship this this year so

4:03:39 if we can do that nationally we need to start focusing on that here in the virgin islands we do we do and thank you for bringing that point up uh senator payne and that's why one of the reasons i mentioned in the previous hearing to the commissioner of sports park and recreation importance of having a marine arm and having a marine coordinator for the department it only fits us being an island surrounded of course by water to have sports activities and water activities i mean and water sports for our young people so i look forward to seeing that implemented also senator johnson you're recognized for your three minutes thank you very much mr chair good afternoon again to all it's been a very enlightened day and to some i know it seems a little frustrating but i can see that my colleagues are all passionate about our children and we all should be we continue leaving and speaking about the children but yet we leave them behind i strong believe when tournaments as the the bubble or the combine is done we should always invite scouts, invite schools so that they can see our children perform in these tournament. Commissioner Sums, I want to say thank you for your, how do i say this? Your piece that you brought today, you continue bringing that wonderful diplomacy and keeping that calm to this here and here today. But I have this question that I want to ask about some of the expense that was done with this combine, and I saw that we spent \$3,400, \$500 and something for rooms, and we also, \$34,000, sorry, \$34,000, and then we spent the next \$34,000 to UVI. Pretty much similar figures. Was this a negotiable fee, and why was that cost so much for just utilizing of the gym for practice?

4:05:51 you uh senator johnson i i can't speak to the fees for sport the sports and fitness center but keep in mind that the bubble we have all of our students on saint croix and saint thomas at uvi because we wanted that sequestration so compared to the room rates that uvi charge which is not negotiable per se uh if you compare that to what we've spent at the hotels on saint croix for the honoring a legend this is a steal we spent i believe 83 000 in hotel costs because it was important that we put our money where our mouth is and give student an opportunity to engage in meaningful sporting activity um i will rely on the department my brothers and sister my brother and sister at the department of sports parks and recreation to talk about the cost for the um sports and fitness center fees at uvi good afternoon renee hansen assistant commissioner in court district thank you senator johnson for that question i would like to let you know that the sports fitness center was negotiated down it was higher at first they were charging us two thousand dollars per day to utilize the gym and remember we had basketball boys basketball girls and the co-ed volleyball at uvi so we did negotiate down to 1 000 per day and i guess the others is um i i think lunch and dinner on the weekends on st croix included in this fee as well um in the in the use of the gym did you utilize that gym for the entire day like how many hours

4:07:41 a day not at all that was a little back and forth unfortunately um some of our coaches wasn't happy with the access but nonetheless that was the cost all right thank you very much i would say maybe three hours during the week and i i would venture to say maybe four or five on the weekend can you explain a little bit and and the um the reason why some of the coach wasn't a please what what what was not appealing to them if you may okay well i'll use i'll use basketball for

example um as miss hobson mentioned we had some students that were still here who graduated the year before and they wanted the opportunity to you know participate in the in the combine so while the other children were going to school from eight to three these these these students were were were free so the coach wanted to carry them during the morning and they do special drills and training and that wasn't that was not available to them as they wish so that's where that's where me so in a negotiation of use utilizing the fitness center wasn't that thirty four thousand dollars pretty much for the whole day of the usage for you guys for me i i can't say i was involved with the the negotiation per se maybe when um my counterpart comes back on but i do believe we we we thought that was the agreement but there was a breakdown somewhere and it could be because with uvi there are so many um levels there you know this the security arm the the whoever was over the gym i believe there was some breakdown in communication somewhere um so that was the result so we didn't have the gym available to us

4:09:45 all day it's very sad to hear what you guys uh spend on on the use of that facility but yet you were kind of limited to the use of the facility. Because when you hear that figure, it jumps out. That's some decent money to use at gym. But then if you're telling me that you negotiate to use this gym, but still everything wasn't put in place for you to utilize the gym as much as you would, it's very sad to hear that you spent that amount of money and didn't get to use the gym to have our children prepare themselves for these games. So, you know, this is something in your next negotiation. I think, you guys, it's a lesson I think you should learn and make sure that every single penny you pay to the UVI, that you have that same amount of time to use that, Jim. Mr. Chair, thank you very much for your indulgence. And to all the testifiers, again, I say thank you. But we have to keep grinding and making sure that our children get the best representation and the best opportunity to be viewed and seen to get those scholarships. Again, I say thank you.

4:10:55 Thank you for the line of questioning, Senator Johnson. Next up, we have Senator General Sorrell. But before we go, Assistant Commissioner, just one quick sidebar. Were you able to make contact with Bates to address the roof by Canada? I'm so sorry. Yes, yes, yes. He took care of it. the community should be happy i would say maybe a month ago we were able to bring that whole process to a closure so thank you senator okay excellent thing it was my pleasure uh senator sarah you're recognized for your three minutes thank you mr chen miss hanson assistant commissioner hanson thank you for all that you do we've been so focused on one agency that i i neglected you So thank you for your passion and what you do.

4:11:44 I just have a few takeaways from today that the Department of Education and IAE must work together, operative work together, action work together, to come up with the guidelines and a schedule for the upcoming season. And then page 9, another takeaway I've noticed is that page 9 of your testimony, education, you have the inaugural honoring a legend tournament is the first in what the Department of Education hopes will be a string of JV and varsity all-star tournaments as we celebrate our return to sports. and as we speak today I can't help but to note the convoluted interaction so IAA is a high school level NCAA they run the sports and I think that IAA I think I know IAA should continue to run the leagues and education you need to focus on developing the athlete in totality from training to, you know, what would it take to get them into college, SAT scores, NCAA clearinghouse, what's not.

4:13:03 So we need some lines of demarcation. So when we sit and education is venturing way too far into IAA's role, and that's the problem. So you have that adversarial back and forth taking place when really it is a job of education to develop that personal infrastructure to develop an athlete. And then I came through the athletic programs of the schools from elementary to college, D1, Division I.

4:13:36 And I want education to utilize its resources. Ms. Hobson is sitting on this line. And Ms. Hobson is the, every time I turn around, she keeps climbing the ranks to something else. in the FIVB Federation. I think she's a Caribbean something-something. Ms. Hapson, what's your title now? Good afternoon, Senator Saro. I'm the vice president at the North American, Central American, and Caribbean Confederation.

4:14:10 Good. She ain't even on the local level anymore. And then you have the sending of Ms. Miranda, and then Ms. Hapson was our national team coach, and then she made us a coach and then everything else and you have miss miranda there and you had mark daniel who was my assistant coach on the first island mix aau team so you have people that understand athletics on this car i think there's a young lady um that's doing a master's in sports management and we have miss thoma with business management i mean you have people that can create a working program but it takes some level of collaboration moving forward and mr sum you answered nice and diplomatic today and i know your willingness to try but moving forward let us not put round peg in square holes let's not have people on a bus in a wrong seat athletics will never move forward and understand the line of demarcation that doe's job is not to run tournaments that is iaa's job to run leagues and your job is to cultivate the athlete and mr sum thank you for your responses today and moving forward i am at your disposal i'm not the expert but i'm opening myself and i'm availing myself if there's any assistance you need if you need us to to fund something if you need us to bring the parties together and I'm sure the chair of the committee as

well will avail himself as we remove sports because if I went to school on a division one scholarship at some point we were doing it right but we didn't have all the bureaucracy in place but a lot of us went to school and division one or two or three scholarships so the system was already there, it wasn't formal. So use what you have and use the resources around you. You have resources, use them. Thank you for the time Mr. Chair.

4:16:14 Thank you Senator. You are welcome Senator Saru and thank you for your contribution to this committee, to our youth of the territory and I'm pretty sure acting commissioner is going to take you on your offer to be able to provide assistance so today has been very interesting we're able to hear some of the updates and the results from the combined bubble and honoring a legend I do have some concerns, and I think this maybe should serve as a learning lesson. I heard the Acting Commissioner mention how some things were done in the past, or how some things, when he came aboard, how he found some things and his willingness to learn from past mistakes from others, and being able to improve and change things to move in the right direction. that's always good and positive and with regards to the bubble I'm hoping they also had an opportunity to sit down evaluate and and decide what can be done better acting Commissioner can you share some of the takeaways that you guys maybe have discussed that could improve in the future with respect to the bubble or the honor and a legend or both senator both both you could take them one and then the next if you choose well let me let me let me say this um i realize that in planning

4:18:04 these activities that we need a broader scope we need to bring more people more stakeholders into the discussion so that at the end of the day uh we envision success for all not just success for a few but success for all so expanding our planning base uh working very closely with uh the iaes because they are valued that's one of the biggest things that i've taken away from this this activity and certainly from today as well um yeah that's it And one of the concerns I had as I read your testimony was regarding to the selecting process of the students that participated in the combined bubble. It seems to me that the process was just by who you know, or is there a criteria identify for the selecting of these students I I think it's best to have sports parks and recreation address that I will say this it wasn't it was based on the knowledge of coaches based on previous student performance so they they may have known uh kirby calendar and known him to be a very good basketball player and so they they even though the criteria was um informal it was based on past previous performance and then of course once school students were selected the division of

4:19:54 sports and athletics checked things like gpa discipline and so forth but i would agree with you that there should be written criteria moving forward yeah an opportunity to those students who might not be directly in the eye of that particular coach because sometimes you have favoritisms that occur um so what opportunity for those students who might have the talent the potential uh the skills or the interests and maybe they were um you know not looked upon so having it open and maybe having a process by which they can make the request or apply and then be evaluated and a decision made upon those are some of the things that i i would recommend for the future now with regards to um yes assistant commissioner hansen i just want to add um just to put on the record um please keep in mind this bubble concept only came about because of the situation that were in with covid there was nothing going on hence the term bubble derived from the nba trying to have a league and we tried to mirror something to get our children back active this is not something that we would we would custom we were customary to do this was something was a brain we brainstormed we tried to get some of our children active it was more like an invitational and yes we did depend on iaa to give us some of their top athletes and then we had to reduce it to 11th and 12th graders initially it was 10th but because of the numbers and of course we had five five entities involved in the initial conversations and i'm going to say it again

4:21:49 it was department of education department of health dsbr vioc so we had the federation presidents also on the calls and interscholastic so it wasn't please don't let people think it was nepotism involved it was an invitational and we were trying to target some of our children who was on a path to perhaps get scholarships or wanted to aspire for um scholarships so and it's just it was just because of the environment the pandemic please let's just keep that in mind it's not something that may happen we were we were hoping that all of us thought that the pandemic was going to be a short-term hiatus we didn't think this was going to be forever or so long so again we just tried to create something within the confines of what we had and i i want to say i know we had a lot of back and forth a lot of disappointment yes we try to i guess don't if this was don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good this is a perfect example of it i don't want us to get lost on what we tried to create it might you might not be happy with the outcome we had some disappointments as well but not knowing what we was going to have on the on the back end we we just please it was just because of the pandemic so i had to get that off my chest oh and thank you for clearing that up assistant commissioner but and i do understand that uh this was just uh because of the pandemic and we are still um facing pandemic so you know we don't know what could happen in the future if we might have to move again and have a similar similar event like like the combined bubble we hope not but we never know so

- 4:23:49 let me ask this question now are we planning for a normal electric season this fall good afternoon senator lucille hobson here at the present moment the st croix interscholastic association and the st thomas st john interscholastic association is planning for normal season as long as school is open. We have already started working on a calendar. St. Croix completed their calendar, shared it with the membership. And when I say membership, I meant the executive officers and the St. Thomas, St. John, IAA, so that they can look at it and see if we can um, work together to make sure all of our leagues run concurrently.
- 4:24:49 Okay. So I'm glad, uh, to hear that assistant, uh, acting commissioner. Um, as, uh, contained in the testimony, uh, we are hopeful and we have planned for sporting activities going into the uh 2021 school year sir so have the coaches for the sports that begin in the fall have they been contacted no they haven't keep in mind that coaches may change from year to year we've had retirements and resignations so we may find that there will be new coaches coming into the system So we really have to wait until the beginning of the school year when schools identify who coaches, who the coaches will be by sport.
- 4:25:42 We would hate to engage people who are not returning, who are not going to be coaching next year. So we really have to wait until the start of the school year. And as I indicated before, we are, with the guidance and assistance of both superintendents, going to be doing professional development training for these individuals the week before school begins for students, which is Friday, August the 6th. And there are questions among the parents wanting to know with regards to vaccination. Would that be something that the school will be requiring or IA with regards to vaccination for student athletes?
- 4:26:26 At this point, Senator, my understanding is that there is no local or federal mandate for vaccination. we strongly encourage our students 12 and up to get vaccinated but at this time there is no local or federal mandate to the best of my knowledge that is requiring that requires individual students to get vaccinated. Ms. Richmond I'm also concerned about the students in the private private sector, private schools, I should say, and pericural schools. Do we have a number of information regards how many of those students from the private schools, pericural schools, were able to obtain scholarships?
- 4:27:19 For Ms. Hobson, were you asking, or for? For you, Ms. Richards, Ms. Richmond. I don't have that information here for St. Thomas, St. John. I can get it for information, but I don't have the private and parochial. But I did want to address one other thing in regards to the start of school for next year. And I think that Ms. Hobson will agree with me that one of the things that we should be working on for our individual students to be prepared is that all students need to have an athletic physical before they can begin any season. One physical takes them through the entire school year. You only need to have one. You don't need one per sport. And so we need to make sure that our students now and their parents now are told about the physical process and that they should be getting in contact with their physicians to get their athletic physicals completed.
- 4:28:22 Thank you for sharing that Ms. Hobson. Lucille, Lucille Hobson here. Senator Karyung, to my knowledge on the private sector, Andreas Bump from Montezuri School received a volleyball scholarship to Colby Sawyer College. And I might not be correct about the second one, but I think Denny Gonzalez from All Saints School also obtained a basketball scholarship to the University of the Virgin Islands. But I'm not sure about Denny, I'm not sure, but I'm sure about Mr. Bump from Montezuri School. And both of those athletes are from the St. Thomas St. John District.
- 4:29:16 Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. I don't have any more questions at this moment. I want to thank each and every one of you for the service that you provide to our young people and our students in the territory. I will allow the commissioner, acting commissioner of Soames to give some closing remarks. You have 30 seconds.
- 4:29:47 Thank you, Senator Carrione. In the book, Trials and Triumphs by the great early atlee uh he talks about governor parwanski's uh being famous for saying never let the good be the enemy of the perfect and assistant commissioner hansen mentioned that um and we strive to be perfect at the department of education but perfection only belongs to god it doesn't belong to us so we never let the good be the enemy of the perfect i i have to say that um i don't take offense but i need to put on the record that i serve the territory i am not the assistant commissioner of education for the district of st corey i am the assistant commissioner for the entire territory all of my family on both sides hail from st thomas anyhow so i consider myself to be a a real virgin islander um director calendar and the staff at the division of sports analytics you know that is a division that we are building uh we've identified the need for additional staff and we've identified a possible funding source for additional staff and i'd like to take a minute a moment and really take my hat off to thank them the work that we do just like the work that the senate does this is a work of passion and at the end of the day my mantra and my belief and my heart is that everything we do is for student achievement and student success we may not do it to the liking of everyone in the community everyone in the senate and certainly everyone in the department but we continue to move forward because we realize inherently that this work is a work of passion and a work that ultimately results in student

success um i remain committed to full uh cooperation and collaboration with all of our partners we have found especially the dsa that partnership is important we we love our brothers and sisters at the department of sports and recreation we love our brothers and sisters at the department of health we have excellent working relationships we can reach out to them at any time at any day and get information and they can do the same for us this is a partnership based on mutual respect and based on the fact that they also share in our vision that student achievement is the ultimate

4:32:20 goal when it comes to education of our most uh precious resources the students and the children of the virgin islands the plans that the division of sports parks i'm sorry the division of sports and athletics has for the upcoming school year is ambitious it will require everyone in everyone's involvement i i hearken back to the saying that it takes a village to raise a child we are clearly in need of the assistance from the village and the senate has an important role to play as a part of the village we are not perfect and we are not the enemy of the perfect we are striving to get to perfect if god allows us if we get to good we are good and we will move on from there i would like to end senator by by thanking you for a very exciting day i must say that we uh feel better at this hearing than we did in the hearing on march 24th um we'd like to thank all of the members for uh their input this afternoon this was a great opportunity for the department to listen to actively listen to learn of the concerns and the items of issue for senators we will definitely take that to heart and if i could humbly suggest senator a working session where we can have that give and take and perhaps a more meaningful interaction and not only a working session with the division of sports parks and athletics but also include the ieas and also include the department of sports parks and recreation where we can really get a give and take and really expand upon our positions and the reasoning why we're moving in a particular direction and get feedback and input we've done it before under the senate president when she was chairman of the committee on education and workforce development and we would welcome an opportunity for a working session with your committee again i want to thank the legislature i want to thank my brother and sister the department of sports parks and recreation i want to thank the valued members from the iea not only those that are here but those that we we interact with and we communicate with i i especially want to pour my heart of gratitude out to the staff at the division of sports and athletics uh they do yeoman's work and i know at times it may seem that their work is not appreciated

4:34:46 but it is from me and certainly on behalf of the commission of education again thank you for this opportunity we look forward to continued cooperation and collaboration with this august body please continue to be safe god bless and have a good afternoon thank you acting commissioner for your closing remarks and uh newly noted your suggestion about the working session i think it's a good idea i do want to place in the record that it doesn't require this committee to call a working session for the Department of Education to meet with IAA and other stakeholders to develop that partnership that is necessary that Ms. Hubsan spoke about in her testimony about that unison relationship. But, you know, your recommendations are welcome and we will hold you to it and we will establish your work in session so you all can meet and we call meet and share ideas suggestions recommendations initiative for our young people because we we all have a common a common goal here and it's how to assist our young people in achieving their goals and their objectives so that's good Ms. Richmond, you'll recognize your closing remarks.

4:36:14 Thank you, Senator Carrionne. I would like to also state that I feel that this meeting is, Senate hearing is a wonderful change from the last. We look forward to looking forward to receiving the allocation of funding as soon as possible so that we can continue moving forward in setting up leagues for the schools. And we also look forward to hearing from the Department of Education on who the contact person is that we can use to incorporate the Our School Today, which can easily be morphed in with a power school program.

4:37:03 And the other thing is that we're just really looking forward to working out these small bumps in the road so that we can make sure that all of our students and understanding that the IAAs start from elementary school because sometimes we focus on just our high school students. Those high school students don't become those athletes until they've gone through the steps of elementary school and the learning and competition that goes along with it. So please make sure that we don't leave behind the thought of these elementary students as we focus on these students who are moving forward with their secondary careers in education.

4:37:57 Thank you. thank you mr richmond uh miss hubson yes good afternoon again um senator carrion i wanted in my closing to touch on several things one of them being about the selection process i know um there has been some talk about how the athletes were selected and i wanted to bring some clarity to it because the coaches for the schools in the saint croix district were contacted to select first as miss hansen said 10th 11th and 12th graders at the time i don't know whether it was monetary or what the issue was but then it was shifted to juniors and seniors and everyone couldn't attend and the selection the coaches gave their recommendations as miss hansen said based upon their experience with the athletes in the various schools and who were on the specific teams that they had from the previous school year which is also one of the reasons why they pulled in some of the athletes that had graduated and hadn't received any scholarships as yet so i i

really wanted to touch on that also a comment was made um about the parents visiting um the colleges and i would like to add that there was visits to benedict college during the week of carnival so it's not that the parents did not go and when they did go they shared the video live

4:40:02 while they were walking through the schools for those that were not able to attend I don't know if the process of athletic transition is fully understood and I would be remiss in not saying that a lot was missed about the bubble. i think the bubble was a good thing and i said that from the onset when i received the call from miss hansen yes there might have been things that have been missed but the department of sports park and recreation took the time to create something to help our athletes at a time when there was nothing going on for them there was no sport activities because of covid19 and i think they should be congratulated for trying to do something for our children yes they didn't get the footage that people expected to get and i after the bubble i even said to miss hansen and mr white commissioner white that i thought it was such an excellent thing that they should try to do it every year but with everything it takes time we sometimes have to work on things this is the first time that they attempted to do it and although there were concerns about the institutions that the athletes got scholarships to these were the institutions that availed themselves to our athletes and these are opportunities that they might not have gotten if not for the combined bubble there are many division schools

4:41:59 two schools that hold their own against division one schools and case in point is the university of the virgin islands and i feel like putting down where the children got the scholarships was shameful in my personal opinion to the children i don't think it was right i don't think this was a forum for it because these children went out there on their own and they secured something for themselves okay and benedict college because when i heard about it here on this forum i looked it up and i said that the reason for their being on probation was financial matters because when they said it when the comments were made i thought there was some problem with the university itself academic wise but when i went and researched it was financial and these children because most of you have their names graduated with honors they were honor students but some of us don't have the money to pay for a top-notch college or get a scholarship to a top-notch college and they got a scholarship and they accepted it some of the parents weren't happy with it because of the fact that the children, I appreciate, but I need you to wrap up.

4:43:47 I'm going to close right now with one last thing, Senator Carrier. Thank you. The purpose of going to college is to obtain a degree. It's not necessarily to play a sport so that they can come back and be productive members of our community. It doesn't matter if you go to a division three, two, or one. It's whether you finish and you can get a job with that degree. Thank you very much for the time. You're welcome, and thank you for bringing those points that you brought in your closing that I think were necessary and essential. Thank you for that.

4:44:31 From the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation, Assistant Commissioner. Closing remarks. Yes, Senator, I just want to thank yourself and the committee for the invite to testify today. And our goal is to continue to work with the Department of Education and IAEA to improve upon what we already started with our relationships with them and and to make sure that our athletes our student athletes uh progress thank you thank you thank you for that and um i would like to end by saying that thanking each and every one of you um for your testimony um and participation in today's hearing but not only for your testimony in today's hearing i really want to thank you also for your commitment to this government and especially for your commitment to our children some of you are doing it voluntarily as part of a nonprofit others are doing it because it's your job and responsibility but also I know there is a passion behind of what you do so you're not only doing it for a paycheck as Mr. as acting Commissioner Soames mentioned you're passionate about that and passionate about our children so i want to commend you for the work and i deeply believe that the initiative combined bubble and honoring a legend were two programs that provided benefits for our athletes and we need more programs to do the same yes there's always room for improvement and i'm pretty sure from what i've heard today you all have gathered recommendations suggestions and ideas and even among yourself you have acknowledged the areas that need to improve so in the future you could do better in similar programs as this one. So today, today was a lot. We uncovered and expanded on many important matters in today's hearing relating to the state of the sports of our students, athletes, and the territory and we're looking forward. However, my colleagues and I are expecting some changes. We would like to see a better collaboration between all the entities that were here today and we would like to see a more more of an effort to put into a building our student athlete profiles we would like to finally see a more more VI graduates attending institutions with scholarships and I think that's the end goal of what we are here and why the this division was created to be able to nurture and develop our athletes so that they could have these opportunities available for them and enable to do so all stakeholders must be at at the table so I want to also thank my staff for all their support and their work I want to thank also media for hanging on and for the work that they do I want to also

4:47:38 thank my committee members and non committee members for being present and sticking along with us in this hearing and overall I think this was a very productive hearing today where we left out with some are leaving with some good

pointers things that have to improve and also allow each one of you to express yourself and a platform to share with the larger community of the results of the combined bubble of the results of honoring a legend and moving forward we are hopeful to hear much more great news of the work that not only the Department of Education through the vision of Sports Atlantic but also the Department of Sports Park Recreation and also the IAA are doing in our territory so I want to thank each and each and every one of you and this will conclude the hearing for today the Committee on Youth Sports Park and Recreation stands adjourned. Thank you. We'll be right back.

People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke · only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

11x	Senator Steven D. Payne Sr. heard in this transcript as: Payne, Stephen D. Payne, Steven D. Payne Sr
10x	Senator Carla Joseph the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph heard in this transcript as: Joseph
9x	Senator Janelle K. Saro heard in this transcript as: Janelle Saru, Saro, Saru
7x	Senator Dwayne DeGraff heard in this transcript as: DeGraf, DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff
7x	Senator Franklin D. Johnson heard in this transcript as: Franklin Johnson, Johnson
7x	Senator Samuel Carrion heard in this transcript as: Carrion, Carrione, Samuel Carriong
6x	Senator Marise C. James the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr heard in this transcript as: James
5x	Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger the surname alone also matches: Alma Francis Heiliger heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Halligar, Alma Francis-Halliger, Francis Heiliger, Heiliger
5x	Senator Javan James heard in this transcript as: Javon James, Jayvon E. James Sr
3x	Senator Alma Francis Heidegger

Bills and acts referred to

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

Act 8365	Act 8365 · An Act providing an appropriation from the General Fund of the Government of the Virgin Islands for the operation of the Government of the Virgin Islands during the fiscal year October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 Re it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands: SECTION 1. The sum listed, or so much thereof as shall be sufficient to accomplish the purposes specified, as set forth, are appropriated and authorized to be paid from any funds in the General Fund of the Treasury of the Virgin Islands, which amounts shall be available for the fiscal year October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. FY 2021 0100 GENERAL FUND A. ORG 110 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PERSONNEL & FRINGE BENEFITS \$ 12,063
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