



## | Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture

Legislature USVI

September 11, 2024 · 4.9 hours · gov

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Source recording | <a href="https://youtu.be/TF6znpuGvXY">https://youtu.be/TF6znpuGvXY</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Status           | This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Transcribed by   | VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Reliability      | Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Public record    | The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" · which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above. |
| Rights           | To what we added · the transcription, its arrangement and its description · we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

0:00:00 Let's get started. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:02:00 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 15 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:09:30 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you.

0:11:30 We'll be right back. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 13 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:18:00 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

0:20:00 Oh Thank you. We'll be right back. The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture is now called to order.

0:21:48 Greetings to the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Today as we convene the Committee on Agriculture and Economic Development I would like to take a moment to remember the U.S. Virgin Islanders and all who are victims of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Specifically Staff Sergeant Madeleine A. White, Felix Bobby Kalix, hopefully I got that correct, that's C-A-L-I-X-T-E, Claudia S. Sutton, William Henry Jr., Christian Maltby, and Chris M. Kirby. This day will forever serve as a reminder of the resilience unity that defines us as a nation as a nation on this day in 2021 we remember our beloved beloved colleague radio personality and former senator holland I redfield ii he was well known for his role in keeping the public informed especially during hurricane season and the COVID-19 pandemic as the host of Straight Talk on Caribbean Country 93.5 FM.

0:23:16 Originally from Syracuse, New York, Redfield made St. Croix his home in the late 60s and served in the U.S. Coast Guard. One of his first jobs was a pilot for the Antilles Airboats known as the Goose. Senator Redfield became a member of the legislature of the Virgin Islands in 1984, serving six terms in the District of St. Croix. I am forever grateful for the

encouragement and wisdom he shared with me and of course many of my colleagues during his time here on earth. I would also like to acknowledge National Literacy Month. The month of September is National Literacy Month, and I'm encouraging all parents, teachers, and everyone in this community to encourage their children to read a book.

- 0:24:11 Lastly, as the chair of this committee, I would just like to let everyone know that I made several attempts to request a status update from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources for today's hearing, but due to reasons beyond my control we would have to hold another hearing to get an update from those two departments from those two departments at a later time mr clerk before we get into the roll call and the reading of the agenda i would just like to make sure that everyone get their testimonies if you have any difficulties getting your testimony my chief of staff will gladly assist you you can have your chief of staff reach out but we have them on the agenda online and on the on the drive and we would also send them via email as well so colleagues if once again if you need testimonies they are on the drive and my chief of staff has circulated them as well we are now ready to proceed with the reading of the agenda and then we will go to roll call the committee on the committee on economic development and agriculture has scheduled a meeting for Wednesday September 11th 2024 at 11 30 a.m. at the Fritz E. Lowe's conference room on St. Croix the committee will receive a status update from the Virgin Islands cannabis Advisory Board and the Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulations. Block 1. The committee will receive an update on the overall status of the USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations, including the implementation of Act 8680 and licensing procedures for the cannabis industry. Invited testifiers Dr. Katherine Kinn, Chairperson of the Cannabis Advisory Board, Virgin Islands
- 0:26:18 Cannabis Advisory Board. Ms. Joanne Moorhead, the Executive Director of the USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations. The Honorable Natalie E. Hodge, Commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. Mr. Horace Graham, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. Mr. Chair, that concludes the reading of the agenda. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Can you please do the roll call?
- 0:27:06 While we wait for that, I would just like to quickly remind the public that we will do our next hearing to bring in the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources we will continue to keep abreast of the issues and the territory and to provide status updates so just want to remind the public mr. Kirk yes mr. chair senator Marvin a blyton he's He's present.
- 0:27:42 Senator Bryden, present. Senator Angel Bocas, Jr. Senator Bocas, Jr., absent. Senator Diane T. Capehart. Senator Capehart, absent. Senator Duane M. DeGraff? Here. Senator DeGraff, present. Senator Alma Frances Heiliger? Present. Senator Frances Heiliger? Senator Donna A. Fred Gregory?
- 0:28:17 I'm here. Senator Fred Gregory? Senator Javon E. James Sr.? Present. Senator Javon James Sr. Present. Mr. Chair? Two absent and five present. you Mr. Clerk. Do we have any correspondence to be read into the record? Yes Mr. Chair. You may proceed. Letter dated September 11th, 2024. Honorable Senator Javon James Sr., Senator of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, 3022 Estate Golden Rock, Christianstead, St. Croix. Dear Mr. Chairman, please be advised that due to a previously scheduled engagement, I will be late to today's meeting of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture. Please mark my initial absence as excused, and I look forward to joining the discussion at the earliest possible opportunity. Thank you for your time and understanding. Sincerely, Angel Bolkis Jr., Senator-at-Large, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands.
- 0:29:36 Any other correspondence to be read into the record? Yes, Mr. Chair. You may proceed. The Honorable Javon E. James Sr., Senator of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands 3022, Estate, Golden Rock, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, 00820. Dear Senator James, I am in receipt of your letter to me, dated August 23, 2024, inviting me to testify before the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture on September 11, 2024. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee.
- 0:30:19 Unfortunately, I have a scheduling conflict and will be unable to attend. Fortunately, the Office of Cannabis Regulations Executive Director, Ms. Joanne Moorhead, will be present and provide testimony on behalf of the OCR and the Cannabis Advisory Board. Thank you again for your invitation. Regards. Catherine Aiken, Chair of the Cannabis Advisory Board. Letter dated September 6th, 2024. The Honorable Javon E. James, Sr., Chairperson of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, 3022 Estate Golden Rock, St. Croix.
- 0:31:08 Dear Senator James, I am writing in response to your letter dated August 20, 2024, regarding the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs' invitation to testify before the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, scheduled for Wednesday, September 11, 2024. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the hearing due to prior commitments. However, Assistant Commissioner Horace Graham will be representing the DLCA in my stead. Assistant Commissioner Graham is fully knowledgeable on the matters at hand and will be able to provide the necessary updates and engage in the discussion as outlined in your letter of invitation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any

further information or adjustments. Thank you for your understanding, and we look forward to a productive session.

- 0:32:18 Sincerely, Natalie Hodge, Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Before we get into today's agenda, I would like to take this time to acknowledge Senate President Novelli Francis Jr. Thank you for being present here today, non-committee member. And committee member, Senator Diane Capehart, please mark her as present and give me an update on the roll call. Mr. Chair, six present, one absent. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We look forward to a productive conversation here today and to get things done on behalf of the people of the US Virgin Islands. As mentioned before by the Clerk, we are here to receive testimony specifically on the topic of adult cannabis usage in the US Virgin Islands. Testifiers are here present in the St. Roy Chambers, and I would like to give you an opportunity to place your name, title, on the record, name and title on the record. Good morning, Senator Joanne Moorhead, Executive Director of the Office of Cannabis Regulation. DLCR. Good morning, Senator Horace Graham, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. Thank you. And we will now proceed with the reading of testimony.
- 0:33:48 point point of personal privilege by Senate President Novelli Francis Jr. good morning mr. chair and thank you very much for this opportunity I wanted to ask you to indulge us in a moment of silence as today is September 11th and if we could just again pay homage to those individuals that made some significant sacrifice on September 11th of course today represent 23 years since that dreadful day and I think it's important as an institution that we pay tribute for this. Thank you for that Senate President Novelli Francis Jr. I would kindly ask everyone to stand up as we have a moment of silence for those victims of September 11th.
- 0:34:44 you may be seated thank you you may now proceed with the reading of the testimony yes you first yeah good morning senator Javon E James senior chair of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture other members of this committee, other members of the 35th legislature present, fellow testifiers and the listening and viewing audience. I am Joanne Moorhead, executive director of the Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation or OCR, a subsidiary division of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. I am joined today by my OCR office assistant Ms. Lynn Marie McCarthy and my DLCA support team represented today by Assistant Commissioner Horace Graham.
- 0:35:41 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before this body regarding the overall status of operations and administration of the Office of Cannabis Regulation. The Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation was first created pursuant to Act number 8167, the Virgin Islands Medical Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act which was a direct result of a 2014 referendum, whereby 56.5% of the Virgin Islands voting public voted to support the licensing and regulation of medicinal marijuana, patients, caregivers, cultivators, and distribution centers. Approximately one year after the passage of Act 8167, the 34th legislature enacted the more comprehensive Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act or Act number 8680. The Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act recognized the need to expand the cannabis industry in order to provide additional opportunities for employment and business ownership for Virgin Islands residents, alleviate social injustices experienced by persons subjected to the criminal justice system in matters related to the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana, it recognized cultural and sacramental uses of cannabis and will generate much needed tax revenues for the territory.
- 0:36:59 This cannabis use act further established a holistic regulated system for the cultivation, manufacture and sale of cannabis for adult, medicinal and sacramental use. Governed by the cannabis advisory board, a body of 11 persons appointed by the governor and approved by the legislature, the office of cannabis regulation has the executive authority to implement and administer the provisions in act 8680, including but not limited to promulgating rules and regulations related to the cultivation, manufacture, sale, dispensary, testing, licensing, and use of cannabis, prescriptive use of cannabis, and sacramental use. As we enter the last quarter of 2024, the Office of Cannabis Regulation, under the oversight of the Cannabis Advisory Board, is realizing significant progress towards the fulfillment of many of the mandates found in Act 8680. We recognize that this has been a long time coming and appreciate the patience of the public as we work diligently to get this right. The OCR rules and regulations were adopted and approved in April of 2024. With the adoption of those rules and regulations, the OCR has been able to begin building the framework by which the legalized cannabis industry will operate. I strongly encourage anyone in the listening or viewing audience who is interested in any aspect of the cannabis industry here in the Virgin Islands to familiarize themselves with these rules and regulations as they provide in great detail all of the requirements for not only individual cards, but also all licensing requirements related to dispensaries, cultivation, manufacturing, research and development, and testing. The rules and regulations as well as Act 8680 can be found on our website, [ocr.vi.gov](http://ocr.vi.gov), on Governance and Regulations page.
- 0:38:57 When this office last testified before this committee in March of this year, it was mentioned that the registry system initially rolled out on January 17, 2024. The registry system is an online system where all practitioners, patients, sacramental organizations, sacramental users, and designated caregivers can apply for, register, and receive their identification cards and certifications. At the time of the last testimony in March, only the applications for sacramental organizations and practitioners were live. At this time, all five of the online application systems are now live. What that

means for our Virgin Islands residents is that any medical patients and or their designated caregivers, sacramental organizations and users and medical practitioners can go to our website at [ocr.vi.gov](http://ocr.vi.gov) right now and apply for their identification card. To date, we have two certified practitioners and two applications pending. We have one registered medical patient and we have had two non-resident medical patient cards registered.

0:40:12 The rollout of cannabis business licenses is probably the topic most frequently asked about and the OCR is happy to report that it will be happening in a matter of weeks. Act 8680 makes very clear the intention of this body to ensure that the license application process for cannabis business license be a fair, impartial, merit-based process. And the OCR takes that mandate very seriously.

0:40:42 Ultimately, the goal of the OCR is to be able to fold the business license application process into the existing portal that we use, also known now as the registry. However, being able to integrate that licensing software application in the manner required will take approximately one year based on projections from our software vendor. In the meantime, we understand the urgency of having licenses issued as soon as possible while always maintaining the integrity of the process as mandated.

0:41:18 For the first round of licensing, we have devised a system that allows us to create an intermediary solution that also upholds the integrity of the process. We hope to have that application process approved by the Cannabis Advisory Board at its next meeting and will publicize the specifics as to how, where and when to apply with the community so that all who are interested can avail themselves of that system. As I have said at every public speaking opportunity the OCR has undertaken thus far, I would like to reiterate to the public that the requirements for the application processes for dispensary and cultivation licenses are lengthy and potentially complex.

0:42:03 Take the time now to familiarize yourself and your business partners with the requirements as the application window will be for a specific time only and then applications are closed until this time next year. Based on current timelines, the OCR expects that the first licenses will be issued by December of this year. In addition to focusing on the business licensing process, the Office of Cannabis Regulation has been assiduously seeking and fostering collaboration with other government partner agencies. The breadth of the cannabis industry is wide and varied and will involve many government agencies such as the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Department of Finance, Department of Property and Procurement, Virgin Islands Police Department, Division of Personnel, Department of Justice, Virgin Islands Bureau of Internal Revenue and Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

0:43:05 Ensuring that all of our GVI team is working cohesively will aid in a smooth rollout of this new program. As the OCR continues to do the work necessary to roll out cannabis business license applications, funding and staffing of the OCR remains critical to maintaining our momentum. Thanks to the hard work and assistance of the DLCA business administration team, the OCR has officially onboarded its second team member, Ms. Lynn Marie McCarthy, who started mid-August. Having her on the team is a tremendous asset, and we expect that she will help us move administrative business along a little more quickly than when the office was just staffed by one person.

0:43:52 Additionally, we are working with the Division of Personnel to ensure that all paperwork has been properly vetted and approved so that we can staff the OCR Enforcement Division. To start, the Enforcement Division will be comprised of a staff of four, including two supervisory positions. As the work of the OCR continues to increase and the issuance of business licenses comes to fruition, the OCR anticipates the need for additional staffing. In the coming months, a communications and training staff member will likely become the next hiring priority. As the rollout process continues to full licensing and regulatory operations and the needs and demands of the industry are assessed and measured, there will no doubt be a need to increase the staffing capacity at the Office of Cannabis Regulation to include at minimum additional administrative support positions, a public safety coordinator, a training specialist, and a full enforcement team.

0:44:54 These additional personnel would in all likelihood not be hired before fiscal year 26. Looking ahead to fiscal year 2025, however, it will be vital that the Office of Cannabis Regulation continues to be funded to fully realize the scope of work outlined in the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act. One of the biggest factors that will determine the growth of the Office of Cannabis Regulation and the industry in general will be the actual submitted responses for licensing. As mentioned, individual and sacramental organization identification cards are available now, and we have not been able to open applications for cannabis business licenses yet. While we are focusing on the business licensing and have focused on dispensaries and cultivation licenses because they are the two most complicated application processes, we are not ignoring the opportunities and requirements for other licensing. Due to the lengthy evaluation and investigatory process for the dispensary and cultivation licenses, we believe that the processes for additional licenses or certifications can run simultaneously so that we do not further delay the much anticipated issuance of business licenses.

- 0:46:11 For example, there will be, as mandated, requests for proposals issued for private testing facilities as well as applications available for third-party vendors, manufacturing and more. The Office of Cannabis Regulation strongly believes that as we continue moving forward to a fully realized industry, a key component to the success of the rollout is a robust public education and outreach campaign with the participation of key partner agencies. Not only will it be critical to the success of those individuals and entities who will be licensed either as consumers or business owners, but the messaging will also be critical for the public, both those who reside here or just visit, and those who actively participate in the industry or those who choose not to, to understand clearly what is permissible and what is not.
- 0:47:07 With the continued support of the 35th legislature and this committee, I am certain that the Office of Cannabis Regulation will continue to evince tangible progress so that the vision of a thriving Virgin Islands cannabis industry in which our medicinal, sacramental, and recreational users may safely and healthily partake is fully realized. As I conclude, I would like to extend a public thank you to the Cannabis Advisory Board Chair, Dr. Catherine Ken, and the other board members for their guidance.
- 0:47:39 the Office of the Governor, and specifically the Special Advisor to the Governor, the Honorable Positive T.A. Nelson, members of this body for their support, the DLCA team led by Commissioner Natalie Hodge, and my newest team member, Ms. McCarthy, for their unwavering support of the OCR. I thank you for the opportunity today to share with your committee the current status of the Office of Cannabis Regulation, and I stand ready to field any questions arising. Thank you. Thank you for placing your testimony on the record. We will proceed with a testimony from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs.
- 0:48:22 Thank you. And good day, Honorable Senator Javon James Sr., Chair of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, esteemed members of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, committee members present, non-committee members in attendance, and the distinguished listening and viewing audience. My name is Horace Graham, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, hereinafter referred to as DLCA.
- 0:48:51 Thank you for affording to DLCA the opportunity to testify before the 35th Legislature on the implementation of Act 8680, which established the Office of Cannabis Regulation. Act 8680 amended Title 19 by adding Chapter 34A to expand the legalization of cannabis from medicinal use to include adult use cannabis and provides for the promulgation of rules and regulations related to the cultivation, manufacture, sale, dispensary, testing, licensing and the prescriptive and sacramental use of cannabis. The licensure and issuance of permits to cultivate, manufacture, dispense, research and develop testing, adult use, temporary use and consumption. The creation of medicinal cannabis certifications forms, medicinal cannabis registry and medical cannabis patient cards and verification system. The DLCA has been actively providing comprehensive support to OCR in its critical development phase. This support has included but is not limited to administrative assistance, the provision of office space, fiscal management and oversight of human resource acquisitions.
- 0:50:14 Specifically, the DLCA has played a key role in the following areas. charge codes and collections. The DLCA has assisted OCR in working with the Department of Finance to finalize and implement a system of charge codes for organizing collections, ensuring transparency and accountability in the financial operations of the OCR. Revision of personnel requisition forms. Personnel requisition forms were revised and updated for all enforcement positions within the OCR, ensuring they align with regulatory standards and accurately reflect the operational needs of the office. Human resource support. The DLCA facilitated the recruitment process by assisting with the interview and hiring of an office assistant for OCR, a critical role that has already begun to see benefits in facilitating the daily operations of the office. responsibilities.
- 0:51:21 In addition to our administrative and human resource efforts, DLCA has assisted with processing payments received from medicinal cannabis patients and providers, a task that is ongoing and essential to the financial stability of the program, and then licensing application process support. One of the key areas where DLCA continues to provide assistance is in the implementation of a mechanism for accepting and processing license applications. Recognizing the importance of a smooth and efficient licensing process, the DLCA is assisting the OCR in identifying a strategic partner to implement an interim system.
- 0:52:02 This system will facilitate the receipt and evaluation of initial set of license applications, allowing the OCR to expedite the licensing process. The DLCA remains committed in its role as a partner in the establishment and ongoing support of the cannabis industry in the United States Virgin Islands. We recognize the importance of a well-regulated and efficiently managed industry and will continue to provide the necessary support to ensure success of the OCR. In conclusion, the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony outlining our extensive support for the OCR. We fully recognize the critical role that the OCR plays in the successful establishment of the

cannabis industry in the United States Virgin Islands, and we are committed to continuing our partnership to ensure the smooth implementation of regulatory processes. Our collaborative efforts, including our work on the mechanism for processing and evaluating initial license applications, reflect the DLCA's dedication to helping the OCR meet its objectives efficiently. By assisting in these foundational tasks, we are helping to pave the way for the long-anticipated launch of the fully functioning cannabis industry, bringing economic growth and opportunity to our territory. The DLCA remains steadfast in its support, and we stand ready to continue providing the resources and expertise necessary for the OCR's ongoing success. We welcome any questions this body may have and look forward to our continued work as we advance the shared goals of responsible regulation and economic development in the United States Virgin Islands. Thank you.

0:53:54 Thank you both for reading your testimony or testimonies into the record. Before I get into our line of questioning, I have two questions I would like to ask. And the first question is, when is the next meeting of the Cannabis Advisory Board? Good morning, Chairman. Scheduled for next Tuesday, the 17th. The reason why I asked, you mentioned that the application process will be approved at the next Cannabis Advisory Board, and I just want to make sure that the public is aware and fully informed on the process.

0:54:40 And second, you mentioned Ms. Lynn McCarthy, her title and duties. She is, her title is office assistant and her duties are being my right hand and my left hand. She's helping me with all of the business and administrative duties in the office. I would like that information at a later time if you can just send it to us. We want to make sure that you have the resources and the means to carry out the mandates, even though you need more individuals.

0:55:20 Yes. I can I can send you that please so the first senator for his line of questioning that would that will be Senator Blyton Senator Marvin Blyton vice-president you're recognized for your five minutes thank you so much mr. chair good morning to my colleagues listening to and audiences staff central staff and good morning to the testifiers assistant commissioner graham and good morning executive director morehead and thank you so much for your testimonies um dd morehead in your testimony you spoke to the kind of bus advisory board do we have a full complement in terms of the board Good morning, Senator Blyden. We do not have a full complement of the board at the moment. We do have a quorum. We have seven members. And I know that we have been trying to work with the Office of the Governor in identifying additional persons who could fill the roles that are vacant at this time. And as soon as · I know it's urgent and it would be helpful for the business of the cannabis advisory board so as soon as we can identify some additional people who um through the through the office of the governor to to nominate very well and in your testimony you spoke to act 8680 and we know the importance of this industry in respect to revenue because right now we are here in uh at the end of the budget season and budget cycle and we know and see and understand the challenges that we face right now with the government in terms of revenues and this

0:57:17 industry can assist in so many ways and uh based on the timeline that we anticipated back when we approved uh at 8680 you know we were wishful and hopefully um hoping that we will have seen some type of revenue moving forward um by this time but nonetheless let me actually go in terms of the pipeline and you said you expect that the first license will be issued by december of this year how many numbers of license do we have in a pipeline though um even though we might see the first one by december and what type of um revenue that we're talking about moving forward after December, say within the next six months of 25 budget season, budget cycle.

0:58:05 Good morning again, Senator. Thank you for the question. I'm sure you recall in the legislation there was very strong intention and emphasis placed on the application process and ensuring that the application process is fair and impartial and that the recipients of the licenses received their licenses based on merit. And so we have been really diligently working towards putting together that process. And so we also know that there's a limitation on the number of dispensary and cultivation licenses in the law as well. And so the first round will be a few licenses per district. It will not be the full complement allowed by law because we also know and it's also stated in the law that we need to evaluate the supply and demand and evaluate how the industry is operating once it gets started. To your question, so how many actual dispensaries we'll be seeing in 2025, I really don't know.

0:59:27 We don't, you know, there are a lot of people, I think, who have indicated interest, but until the applications are available and we actually receive applications in hand and see what we have, I don't think everything else at that point would just be conjecture. And truthfully, I think that we probably will not see open doors on dispensaries before the first four to six months of 2025. And again, so projections of revenues is a little premature, I think, at this time.

1:00:07 We need to still talk to Bureau of Internal Revenue, who will be collecting taxes, etc., and see what our businesses look like once we issue those licenses before I could give you an estimate based on something other than just conjecture. Okay, Edie Moorhead, thank you for that. Let me ask you though, in respect to a smooth rollout that you spoke to of the program, and you brought on Ms. McCarthy to assist you moving forward. said first you're going to hire four um ocr

enforcement um because staff of the ocr enforcement division right and then you're going to have um four which includes four supervisory positions and you're going to increase and insurance of business license come from to fruition Let me ask you, though, when it comes to communication, training of new officers, and I know you said you have been speaking in other different departments within the government to assist you in a smooth rollout of your plan.

1:01:23 Let me ask you, in respect to collaboration and coordination of the different departments that's assisting you, you believe you're going to be on target in terms of your timeline moving forward? Senator Blyden, thank you again. I think so. I think that, again, we are targeting sort of a rollout that it's not all at once. So, you know, and we're purposely doing it that way so that we have time to also reflect and make sure that we're doing it in a way that is sustainable and in a way that affords everybody to be able to be successful.

1:02:12 each of the government agencies as well as the eventual business licensees and so it is it is a very measured and intentional rollout versus sort of a free-for-all just open the doors and so in that way I think we will be able to meet our timelines that we've set and certainly I'm looking forward to having some enforcement staff so we can get that part of the pie that piece of the pie going and including mr chair if i may wrap up on one last question please yes you can wrap up okay um and edie moorhead you spoke um in respect to the rollout and having a robust public education and outreach campaign i really have not been having much in the interim in terms of regular updates etc so folks can really be engaged and aware of what's going on What will that look like, that robust outreach campaign to all people here in the territory that we can assure that they are part of the industry and they have a level playing field moving forward? And thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for the time.

1:03:20 Thank you again, Senator Blyde. And that campaign will be much more comprehensive than what we've been doing so far. We just have had limited staffing and we have had some priorities and some other things that we had to get sort of squared away so that we could start to have things to talk about and to explain to the public. I have appeared on the radio already. We have done some social media, all of which, of course, needs to be bumped up. And once we have applications available, some additional group meetings, Other than having sort of smaller group meetings or smaller opportunities to discuss the process and how it works with individuals, certainly we'd be open to having larger, like a town hall or I know the previous executive director was doing what she called fireside chats.

1:04:19 We can do those again as well, both virtually and in person to educate the community on how the process will work. Thank you Senator Blyden for your line of questioning and along the same line of questioning as far as social media, I know you have a website, I know you have links on your website as far as sharing those links from the website to the page, do you do that? Do you have that Facebook page I should say? Chairman, yes, we do have a Facebook page, we do have an Instagram page, and we do refer folks on the social media back to the website because a lot of those documents are on the website, so all of the, especially the rules and regulations, which I stress to people all the time, that they really need to get to know what's in the rules and regulations so that they can find all of the different ways that they can participate in the industry.

1:05:22 So we do share back and forth a little bit. That's all. All right. If I may, Mr. Chairman, one of the things that I believe the Department and the OCR continue to message is that accessing the rules and regulations, anyone who is interested in going forward, participating in the industry in any form or fashion, that taking some time to familiarize themselves at this time with the rules and regs. They are very comprehensive. I believe that that would go a long way to them being able to do so. So at any time that you or anyone else has the opportunity to come talk with constituents or any other opportunity, just direct them to the rules and regs. It's available at the OCR website. And many people have responded to us that that has been immensely helpful in them understanding what's going on with the process.

1:06:16 my question since we're talking about the rules and regulations ever since we have finalized them have you seen any room for changes that's a simple yes or no absolutely all right at a later time I guess we can discuss that I will leave that opportunity for my colleagues don't want to abuse the chair senator de graph you're recognized for your five minutes thank you mr chair good morning colleagues good morning testifiers all of you and listening present so ed right now we have a process i meet the individual individuals have come to me on the street asking me about the OCR. How do I, one, get the process out to them? The average person, but how much pages are we looking at in terms of reading of the rules and regulations?

1:07:23 Good morning, Senator DeGraff. The rules and regulations are about 130 pages. That's why I suggest to people all the time to please go online, download the PDF, and get familiar with it. There's a lot of information in there, a lot of requirements of those persons who are interested in becoming business owners. So it is not light reading.

1:07:54 It is complex in some parts, and so that's why I have been trying to tell people to please read it. And then the website again is the ocr.vi.gov. OCR.vi.gov. Yes, sir. Okay. I'll pass that on. I just said that because I was told that, you know, the

rules would be long and, you know, lengthy and, you know, so that sometimes scares people away. Now, where are you located physically?

1:08:33 Your office. The office. Myself, I'm based in St. Thomas, and now that I have an office assistant, she's based in St. Croix, so we do have someone from the office in St. Croix as well. and we're both physically located in dlca offices okay so someone can come to the office for assistance in opening up or applying for you know the the cannabis regulations will be a part of the industry uh yes senator um they can also call us the telephone number is 714-9755 and i do get phone calls i do get emails a lot of phone calls actually for people who if they don't understand something or they want some clarification on something they can call us and we can certainly assist them in finding out what it is they need to do where they need to go for the next steps whether they're interested in medicinal patient information or further on for business licensing okay great now um that average person young entrepreneur male female want to get involved people have expressed to me that they feel their pockets aren't deep enough um is is any consideration given to uh individuals regarding their financial status so to speak um again another good question senator de graf uh the there's nothing prohibiting interested persons from forming partnerships

1:10:28 I think, in fact, it is beneficial for most people if they were interested to form a partnership. I think we have lots of individuals in the territory with varying degrees of experience in different aspects of the business and just business in general. And there are many opportunities, if you read the rules and regulations, there are many opportunities for different business services as well, so it's not just dispensaries and cultivation licenses, there are other opportunities as well for people who have varying levels of capital access and experience and I think this provides a really great opportunity for a lot of people in the territory who are interested.

1:11:20 Okay, that's good. So in a recap, you are physically located at the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs in the Sub-A area on St. Thomas. And where on St. Croix? The DLCA offices in St. Croix are located at Golden Rock Shopping Center. Okay, at Golden Rock, St. Croix, your phone number is 340-714-9755 on St. Thomas. What is the phone number on St. Croix? It's one number.

1:11:58 Time. It's forwarded, so it goes to the same place. Okay, and in closing, if I may wrap up, Mr. Chair? You may wrap up. okay so in close and then uh your website is ocr.vi.gov correct yes sir okay i just wanted to make sure you're not get out as much information so that people know how to get in contact and and don't find excuses and then blame you or the organization that we are not being you know helpful so once they're able to have access to you then we could work on moving forward and moving the whole industry forward so thank you again for all the information thank you for the time mr chair thank you senator de graaf before we get to senator novelty francis jr i know i mentioned social media and we spoke about it but can you place the username or the name of the page on Facebook, and if you don't have it, you can get back to it.

1:13:07 I can tell you the · give me one second. The Instagram handle is at usvi.ocr. That's Instagram and our Facebook. We are under USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations on Facebook. All right. you for placing that on the record senator francis you're recognized for your five minutes thank you very much mr. chair good morning to you my colleagues and good morning to the testifiers good morning to those in the audience as well and good morning to the people at the Virgin Islands I want to take this opportunity again to thank you for your testimony testimonies Ms. Moorhead, as well as Mr. Graham, Assistant Commissioner at Graham.

1:14:04 Moorhead, how have you adjusted into this new role and responsibility? Are you still liking it? Good morning, Senate President. I am having a good time. It is a lot of work, though. It is a lot of work. I'm not going to prevaricate. It is a lot of work. So I hope that that has understood the scope of work that is involved in standing up a whole new department and creating the framework sort of from scratch.

1:14:36 Do you believe that you're making some progress forward? What do you see as of your position right now in respect to getting the necessary support and assistance in moving this industry forward? Francis, we definitely are making progress. You know, I think that it's always easy to think that things should move faster. But I know that working for the government of the Virgin Islands essentially and working for the people of the Virgin Islands, my goal is to do it right. And so we are taking time to make sure that we put the process in place so that we don't have to go back and redo it, so that we don't make mistakes, so that we do right by the people of the Virgin Islands. And so yes, it maybe isn't going as fast as some would like, but we really are making very diligent efforts to get it right.

1:15:40 Thank you for that. And looking at the moment in time, do you believe that there have been any missed opportunities? And how are we working towards utilizing time to make sure that we're advancing so that we don't continue to miss opportunities? In terms of missed opportunities, I mean, I do think, you know, had we had additional staff maybe a little bit sooner, you know, the timeline would have altered, right? We might have been able to compress the timeline a little

bit and do things a little bit faster. So I mean I think that that might be for me the biggest missed opportunity is just getting additional staff and an additional team on board faster so that we can you know many hands make light work. And so that I think has been the biggest hindrance really is just the size of the team that we have. But DLCA has been very supportive and we really you know have been in our work and talking to other government agencies, I think we're really building sort of a coalition team to really get it moving faster. What is your current budget? What is available to you at this time?

1:16:57 We're still working on our \$1 million appropriation from Act 8680. And is that \$1 million available to the OCR at this time? It is available. have expended some of that money and we have some additional expenses that we know when I was here in July before the budget committee that we spoke about so there are lots of things suggestions that you and your colleagues made and so we are working to getting those things those expenses encumbered and we have spent some of that money so far so we'll be coming back in respect to some of One of the policy position statements that have been put in place so far, one of the concerns in the community is regarding the sacramental use. Where are we with that and how are you accommodating that?

1:17:52 So that's such a great question. So thank you for asking about that. The sacramental users, sacramental organizations, it's all available right now. What we have put in place, it requires the sacramental organizations to be registered with the lieutenant governor's office as a faith-based group. Once they do that and provide us with a membership list so that we know that John Doe is a member of this particular sacramental group, then it's very, very easy to register.

1:18:29 It's all online. I know we have not seen in the portal the interest, but we have been speaking to members of different sacramental organizations who are interested. I think there's more of that that needs to happen. I think just a little explanation of how it works, because I think in general, you know, we see that they didn't quite understand the process. So we're, you know, taking a step back and going to the organizations and different members of the groups to make sure that they understand how it works, and I know, I think one of those groups is already registered with the Lieutenant Governor's Office, and so we should be seeing some of that coming on stream shortly.

1:19:15 Okay. And is equal energy being spent with those individuals that may apply for the medical use? Yes, sir. Good. One minute. Yes. We definitely have, I know I have a gentleman here in St. Croix, I don't know his name but he calls me every week and he's looking so we have been talking to try to get additional practitioners certified so that we have more options for those who are interested in becoming medical patients. We do have one medical patient registered but you know we definitely are looking for additional practitioners because I think that that will allow for more access for patients who need to get their patient certification forms. Okay.

1:19:59 And two quick final questions on this round. You continue to say that the rules and regs are very complex and it's a heavy read. Is there an opportunity, are you considering, and putting in place perhaps a cliff note version again that could help to simplify this? Senator Francis, thank you. That is a great suggestion. have thought about it and then just I just haven't had time but I also do know that for example other organizations that we've spoken to for example UVI cell they are very versed on the rules and regulations and they are very much willing to speak with folks in the community who are interested and they can also help you sort of you know narrow your focus and figure out what your steps, your own personal individual steps are that need to be taken. Like I said, people can also call me if they have questions. I think sometimes talking it out with somebody sort of makes, helps to clarify some of the things. But certainly we do need to increase our social media activity and presence.

1:21:12 And one of the things I think would be to sort of figure out how we can make some of those pieces of the rules and regulations a little bit more bite-sized. You're going exactly what I thought about in terms of getting UVI to support and assist you with that. Mr. Chair, I have one final, if you'll allow it. Thank you. In the testimony or in my reading here, there was some conversation in respect to the UVI Tech Village as well as the Enterprise Zone programs. Can you tell me what's the conversation that's being considered in respect to some amendments may be required in that area um i believe so in in act 8680 uh there is a provision there for the promotion of research and development in the in the legislation which specifically speaks to uvi or other universities similarly situated uh being able to um grow and conduct specific research on cannabis and cannabis industry, agronomy, et cetera. And I believe that there is a proposed amendment to that section that would allow research and development companies to partner with the university in that regard.

1:22:34 And that's where that, I think you've skipped ahead to this afternoon's testimony, but I think that that's where that came in. There is a proposed amendment for that so that people, research and development companies associated with the RT Park would be eligible for tax benefits similar to other RT Park. Thank you very much. I'm the author of the South Shore Enterprise Zone so I'm always considerate of what's happening within that zone and that's the reason why I ask about that question. Thank you very much Mr. Chair for the time and opportunity. Thank you for your responses. Thank you Senate President Francis. My question to you Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs assistant Commissioner Graham

in no way shape or form I'm going to imply that your office work for the office of cannabis regulations but as far as the basic information like the website the web page the website the social media pages letting them know where the rules and regulations are if a person calls DLC Do you think that's something your staff will be able to assist, at least relaying the basic information if somebody calls the LCA?

- 1:23:51 Senator Horace Graham, Assistant Commissioner. Mr. Chairman, absolutely. The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, we do have the same receptionist services, and so we provide that upfront communication to the public. So if, indeed, individuals call, if it matters to be addressed by the OCR, by the Board itself, certainly, or by the OCR, it certainly will be transmitting that to the office. But simple questions on where to find certain information that can and will be provided to the community through our receptionist. Yes, because I was just making sure that you have at least a one-page script. Don't have to be every single technical detail, but at least individuals know where to find information.
- 1:24:45 And it's only based off of an experience I had with a constituent, but that was some time back. I'm not going to put on a record, but just letting you know to just work with her because she has a skeleton crew, skeleton staff, so please work with her. Next in line we have Senator Francis Alma, Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. You're recognized for your five minutes. Hold on one second, hold on one second Senator. My apologies.
- 1:25:22 I would like to take this time to acknowledge my Vice Chair, Senator Angel Bocas Jr. So Mr. Clerk, can you please mark Senator Bulkus as present? So we have a full complement of seven committee members here today, along with non-committee member, Senate President Novelli Francis, Jr. You may proceed, Senator Alma Francis-Hylego. Thank you. Good. Good afternoon to my colleagues, to the people of the territory.
- 1:25:58 I'm not seeing myself on video. Are you guys seeing me? Media, if you can just work with Senator. OK, we can see you now, Senator. OK, thank you. I was only seeing my name. That's how I was verifying. Good afternoon to my colleagues, to the people of the territory. Good afternoon to the testifiers. The first set of questions I want to ask, I know we had extensive conversations in regards to people being able to access all this information online. Is there a channel open for those who might not be internet savvy and would like to come and pick up a form, whether through OCR, licensing? Is that going to be something available or is that also available as of now? As you know, everyone might not be able to access computers.
- 1:26:52 good afternoon senator francis heiliger um thank you so much for that question uh at the moment there is not um there is not a way there is not a printed form for the applications that are currently available um and i'm trying to think um really i think because especially for the applications that are currently online and available, some of that has information that is sensitive and is to remain private and secure, which is why we have the online system that we have and the security that we have for that information.
- 1:27:38 So I, you know, if we do have individuals, and so far I don't think we have an overwhelming volume of individuals so that I would ask kindly that they give us a call and we can definitely help them and help the individuals sort of walk through or see what's the best arrangement that can be made for those who are not internet savvy. So that would be my preference actually if they gave us a call and we could assist them. Okay, thank you. The second question I had had to do with the identification cards, and you said some people have already attempted to apply, et cetera. How long are these cards good for? What would be the expiration time period? Are they up for renewal? When? Could you share that with us in the public? Sure. So I think you're referring to the medical patient cards, those identification cards, medical patient cards, so they're valid for one year, so the fee that you pay is a one-year fee from the time that you are issued your card, right?
- 1:28:54 And it does require visits to your practitioner, the certifying practitioner, and depending on the patient needs and depending on what the practitioner certifies for that individual it could be the the practitioner could restrict it to six months or a year but no one card will ever be valid for more than one 12-month period okay thank you so much for that um the next question i want to ask has to do with you spoke about a vendor working with you uh we know that this is going to be something that we have to deal with cost what is the cost thus far for this particular project because i know you said um another year for other parts of it to roll out what is the cost that you guys have come up to so far and is there anything you foresee that might extend what the initial cost is you're dealing with right now and could you also share with us who the vendor is thank you sure so currently the vendor that we're using for the registry is tyler tech uh and we've we that contract for the existing portal the existing registry system is \$248,666 annually.
- 1:30:31 So when I spoke about the vendors, so we have had conversations with them because it is probably the easiest, most convenient and expedient way to integrate the business license portion of that into the existing system. That way, potentially, I could be a medical patient and also have a license to be a microcultivator or something to that effect, right?

You can have multiple applications in the system. And so we are still in the proposal stages of the conversation with Tyler to determine how much it will cost. We do have a proposal and we're working with Tyler and Department of Property and Procurement to get sort of to the next steps and to try to finalize those numbers and the scope of work to see what that will really look like.

1:31:31 but uh i can that's okay um i just heard my time call but i just want to wrap up quickly with what she said did you say this 280 000 plus is on an annual basis that's how much you would have to pay every year or is that the initial set of cost and then there's a maintenance fee for the website annually i just need clarity on that thank you mr chair for the time you're welcome um senator francis heiliger thank you again that is an annual cost i believe um that contract was executed i believe maybe in 2023 the end of 2023 uh and i think if i pull up the contract i think how it worked is that they it's a multi-year contract and they they worked it out so that it is the same payment every year and they sort of did the math so that the implementation fee I can't I can pull it up for you if you like go get the contract but the implementation fee was one fee and then there is an annual maintenance cost and that's the contract worked out to 200 approximately \$250,000 a year.

1:32:49 Thank you, Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger, for your line of questioning. My question to you, Director, as far as the conversation surrounding expungement, how is that coming along? How many individuals we have in the system who will have their records expunged? Senator James, thank you for that. As you know, Act 8679 was the bill that dealt with auto expungement and created the auto expungement task force out of the office of the governor. And they have been meeting, and to my knowledge, they have submitted the first round, the first petition and I believe it was 17 individuals that were included in that first round for simple possession. They share the information with me there is a link on our website again for information expungement resources on our website so that persons who think that they may qualify for that expungement can find the petition on our website as well, and when the Auto Expungement Task Force meets or if they change any of the policies or the work that they're doing, we share that information. But that's all I have for you.

1:34:24 And who does the public reaches out to directly as far as getting information on that as far as the Office of the Governor? Correct. Correct. The auto expungement task force is based in the office of the governor. But again, on the website, it tells you, it gives you the petition. You can download the petition. It also tells you exactly which charges are included that you can get expunged. And then, you know, it refers you also to, it's really Department of Justice. So there are resources and telephone numbers and other places that they can access information. Of course, they can always go to a private attorney or seek legal services, but it's on our website. There's a link that says expungement resources. It's on the bottom of every page, so that there's a link that they can click and see all of that information and including how to get additional information.

1:35:25 Is there any way you can put it to the top of the page, or in the tabs on top of the page? Yes, there is. I will get with BIT to make that change and add it to the drop-down menu up at the top. Yes. Senator Diane Capehart, you're recognized for your five minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to my colleagues, good afternoon to the people of the Virgin Islands and to the team that's before us today. just want to say that the Virgin Islands is keeping up with the times but my my biggest concern and I didn't even hear it adjust today was the use of marijuana the availability for our adolescent concerned about the use of the availability that they can have and I see that because I've had the opportunity to work for the Virgin Islands Police Department where at one period a lot of students were being taken to the hospital for consuming edibles and I know this is going to bring economic growth accompanied with some social cost so I know you know I've lived in California I've been in Colorado and you know I've seen where there are so social consequences where there's cognitive impairment short-term and long-term psychosis heightened when used by adolescents how are we going to deal with this I want to be able to feel comfortable as we think about the economic impacts and the growth we have to also think about the social impacts what are some of the things that we are going to do as we deal with this new industry good afternoon senator Capehart I thank you for that I'd like to start by by saying to you that I 100% personally, have the same concerns that you do for our young people.

1:38:09 The OCR, I believe your colleague Senator Francis asked me that the last time as well, and it is something that the OCR 100% takes very seriously. Luckily, perhaps, we don't have to do it alone, right? There is a need for continuous public education, public outreach, and certainly partnered with agencies such as the Department of Health and Virgin Islands Police Department. These are things and messages that we need to really get out to the public and to our young people. and and if I may also say you know in our homes then we have conversations about personal responsibility and making good choices it is you know similar to other products and other things that are out there that are legal for consumption and the same conversations that we have with our young people about not drinking and driving etc are the same kinds of conversations that we also need to be having with them about the use of cannabis and and i certainly i as i mentioned i've been on the radio and i talk to people in the public and every single time i very strongly remind them it is never going to

be legal to use cannabis in public spaces you can't walk down the street smoking marijuana i know people will say but people do it that doesn't make it legal People make choices for themselves to do what they have to do, you know, but it is definitely a conversation that I anticipate that the OCR will be involved in much more with other agencies, like I said, and really making concerted efforts to put out to the community good messaging about making responsible choices with our young people.

1:40:11 Thank you. Um, is there a social equity program for convicted cannabis offenses? So there is a social equity plan in Act 8680 that speaks to those persons who may have had some legal or justice system interactions regarding cannabis and marijuana. And as we And it is in the application process for some of the businesses that there would be some consideration given to those individuals who qualify for that program.

1:40:50 So when you said there may be some considerations, you have, Mr. Chair, if I may conclude, you have a list of how you would be eligible if you were convicted of cannabis offenses? Yes, so the application process, again, based on the legislation and our rules and regulations mandates that it must be merit-based, and so there will be a scoring process used where that is clearly delineated for the evaluators as to how you score an application with those kinds of applicants.

1:41:35 Okay. mr chair if i may conclude if miss moorhead could even talk about consumption lounges and how do you select who would be selected for the lounges the costs the process if you can do that on the chair's time thank you senator thank you sure um that the adult use lounge process is similar to all of the business license um applications associated with the ocr it is an application process um and the fees i can pull those up for you i believe it was The adult use lounge permit is \$1,500 and that, again, in the rules and regulations there are lots of sort of parameters for what that business needs to look like in order to get a permit. And so those individuals interested in the adult use lounge obviously would have to demonstrate that they can meet those requirements prior to that. And in the law and the rules and regulations, of course, there are all kinds of parameters about where those can be, where the consumption can take place, et cetera, you know, things like you can't see it from the road and all of those things that also tie into what your first question. So that's all in the rules and regulations all listed out. And as soon as those are also available, that's all going to be posted and publicized, you know when those applications are also available Senator Senator Dan Capod you're recognized for your point of information thank you I just wanted to ask as it pertains to the process is there a lottery process in selecting those lounges for the lounge no it is not a lottery process it will be

1:43:54 similar to the others where it is an application process we will post requirements for the applications when when we open the application process for that the requirements will be posted and then individuals or entities can submit submit their application for review and evaluation. Thank you Senator. Quick question. As far as the conversation with the DEA scheduling cannabis from Schedule 1 to Schedule 3, I know they haven't made the final rule as yet and right now they are going through the process of reviewing every comment. Are you monitoring that conversation and preparing for that?

1:44:40 Senator James, yes, we are definitely monitoring that conversation because, you know, that certainly changes a lot of the conversation that we're having here. And it changes a lot of things if the Feds deschedule or reschedule cannabis to Schedule 3. To the best of my knowledge, I believe the DEA is having a hearing in December, the first week of December. and so they've sort of pushed off further the conversation a little bit at the federal level until after the elections but that's the last that I've seen that there is another hearing scheduled the beginning of December so we'll have a better idea then of maybe what we're looking at whether they're leaning towards or leaning against and when that might change if it does the The reason why I ask that because I know if cannabis moves to a Schedule 3 drug, it will no longer be subject to Section 280E of the Internal Revenue Code.

1:45:49 So businesses will now have a better chance of getting into the cannabis industry and to be able to relax some of the restrictions that we have when it comes to taxes and banks and what have you, because I know that has been a very disappointing issue for us, and we want to make sure that individuals can put their money in the bank. So Senator Donaford Gregory, you're next and you're recognized for your five minutes, followed by Senator Angel Bocas.

1:46:26 thank you uh mr chair and good afternoon to the testifiers and good afternoon to the listener viewing audience and today we kind of playing musical chairs because we are upstairs and downstairs we're trying to wrap up our fy25 uh budget so um please pardon me for not sitting on the floor like i usually do mr chair so um let's talk a little bit about we know that you know we merged uh medical cannabis and adult use so and medical cannabis has been enacted before i became a legislator sometime in 20 i want to say 2017. so are we doing any work in earnest around medical cannabis in the territory because i know when we once we had to shift how do we make that shift and is there anything around medical cannabis that's happening right now as we speak good afternoon senator fred gregory um that's a good question and and i hope that i hope that this answers your question. So medical cannabis, we have currently the ability for those people who have a qualifying medical condition to become certified in the territory and have valid medical patient cards. I know that there is some question as to the availability of product for those who have medicinal patient cards to use but I would like

to take the opportunity to remind people in the territory that if you have a valid medical patient card and if you that means that a practitioner has certified you with a

1:48:25 qualifying medical condition you can also grow for yourself at home and that way you have the medicine that you are in need of there's also provisions for those who can't wait hold up pull right there yes ma'am so let's be very careful with you saying you can also grow yourself because there's there's a law in place and then there are rules and regulations around it so you have to be specific and as to what you are able to grow and whether or not we have effectively rolled out the program so be very mindful because we don't want to create any unnecessary uh any confusion if you will so um is it that we are we have rolled out that portion of it or that's what i'm trying to establish and if we have how are we communicating with our community and what does that look like so we have rolled that portion out the the there The availability for medical patient cards is currently online, and there is the option for medical patients, let me be clear, please, thank you for allowing me to clarify. There is an option for medical patients to grow for their personal medical use only, not to grow to sell, but to grow for their personal use only.

1:49:55 is an option for those medical patients to grow at home for themselves for their medical use i hope that now that that is clear okay fine yes so i'm gonna move on from that because i i really want to know how are we advising our community of that and are we issuing uh cards for that particular purpose or we don't have to or they don't need cards since they're not going to a a dispensary at this time we are issuing cards it's all part of the same system so if i wanted to be a medical patient i'd go online after i have gone to a practitioner the practitioner certifies me for uh with a patient certification form also online and then i apply i receive a digital medical patient card that digital medical patient card has information regarding expiration dates and whether or not i am authorized to grow and so yeah thank you for that so um so now let's get to the actual uh legislation that was passed uh the adult use or recreational use i think is what it's called so it's the merger of both uh medical and uh recreational use so uh we know that you uh you have you you are completed with the rules and regulations and you have that on your website i saw in your testimony correct yes ma'am and when do you anticipate because i know there's there's a there is a lot that has to be done in order to stand up this uh you know this work or the the whole cannabis uh in the virgin islands i think i heard my time called may complete

1:51:46 Mr. Chair sure so the question that I have is around um the the uh the application opportunity when are we going to see the application open and if it's down the road perhaps this was already asked and answered what are the things that we need to make sure that we have in place prior to the application period being open So, Senator Fred Gregory, thank you.

1:52:25 The Cannabis Advisory Board has to approve the application. I indicated, I think, either my testimony or an earlier question, that we have devised a sort of an intermediary solution. It is not a permanent solution, similar, or vis-a-vis the registry that we have now. We would like to integrate it all into one system, but we do have a system, and the next Cannabis Advisory Board meeting is next week, Tuesday the 17th, and I am going to be giving them the application and the process for them to approve, and once that is approved, we hope within short order, maybe a couple weeks, a few weeks, to be able to open the application process for dispensaries and cultivation licenses. And then simultaneously, because that is a lengthy process, there are time limits that are baked into the legislation, and so that still gives us a few months' time that we will also be working on some of the other things that we're working on for example uh getting testing facilities licensed um you know and and those other sorts of things that can all sort of be happening simultaneously while applicants are getting their packages together all right i do have some more questions but i know that my time has been called because you open another part of the conversation i guess mr chair you can pick it but it's tied to the testing facilities licenses and i did ask about the um you know what are the things that you need to have stood up uh well while the application process the applications of processes being taken place i know there are things that has to be stood up in order for this to work uh you know in a in a in a appropriate manner or successful is the word so you didn't

1:54:32 give me what are the things that you know you need to most definitely have stood up in order for us to move forward with the application because there's one thing to fill out the application you get the approval but when do we start the work when the when do they uh those those successful business individuals uh when are they able to actually begin the process of you know doing their side of the business which is standing up their operations so if you could answer that on the Chair's time. I will appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you, Madam Finance Chair, and you may answer.

1:55:08 Senator McGregory, I think that in addition to testing facilities and enforcement, for example, those are things that must be in place. Again, we are working towards that so that, for example, enforcement will be up and we will be having our SOPs and things like that for enforcement and compliance before the deadline for the applications has lapsed. I anticipate that it will not be before December before the application process is complete and therefore we will not be able to select or announce who those licensees will be and And then, of course, there is another process for them once they have

received the go-ahead for them to stand up their business. So there is some time. We are working simultaneously already on making sure that we have testing facilities available, making sure that we have ways to check and validate compliance and enforcement. So I hope that answers your question a little bit better. If not, I can try again.

1:56:25 Thank you, Director. And we will have a second round. This block is scheduled to finish at 2 o'clock, so colleagues, if you're listening to the sound of my voice and you're in the St. Thomas building, just know that we have a second round. A quick question, Act 8680, as far as what has been expended thus far, can you speak to what has been expended thus far or what is re or what is remaining of that balance of 1 million dollars so I'm gonna give you some chance I'll give you some time to look at that and I will proceed with moving forward with senator Angel Borges, Jr. Senator Angel Borges, Jr., you're recognized for your five minutes.

1:57:23 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, colleagues. Good afternoon to the listening and viewing audience, and good afternoon to the testifying panel here with us today. I wanted to start off by asking Executive Director Morehead a few questions. Concerning your training programs for your staff and participants in the industry, with a planned rollout of training programs for the potential industry, its participants, and the enforcement personnel what is the timeline for launching those programs and basically how are you ensuring that the training will adequately prepare both the staff and the operators to comply with the regulations set out by the ocr good afternoon vice chair uh thank you for that question so regarding training for enforcement um we're a little it's taking a little longer than i had hoped to get the paperwork through the process in order to hire the enforcement division staff however we have been working also simultaneously to identify training I have certainly been included in conversations where we had discussions with VIPD and making sure that we have sort of a cohesive understanding of how that will take place.

1:59:07 And so we have identified or requested some proposals on training specific to cannabis for our enforcement division and other law enforcement agencies as needed or, you know, as they desire. And we're looking at probably realistically now probably the end of October, beginning of November when we would be able to offer that sort of comprehensive cannabis training for those individuals?

1:59:42 I would encourage you to do so because I believe that that is a very important piece of the puzzle. Whereas, you know, having the staff trained properly in the enforcement, in addition to operators with compliance of whatever is set forth by the OCR. So, you know, I know we don't want to put the, you know, the old notion, the chicken before the egg, or which one comes first, right? But that's just my opinion.

2:00:09 Concerning your merit-based application process, you stated that an RFP for consultants to score the merit-based licensing applications is being developed. when can we expect that the RFP is finalized and what is the anticipated timeline for beginning the process of those licensures? I'm not sure if that question was asked before because I came in later at a prior engagement, but I would like to know the answer to that.

2:00:44 Thank you again for the question. I believe the RFP that you are referencing may have been in a previous testimony. There was an RFP for a merit-based evaluation system. So, you know, I also read the previous, your predecessor's report, the last report that your predecessor gave, that was also part of the documents for this hearing today. So that is correct. The nature of that question comes, derives from that report.

2:01:28 I'm assuming that the OCR is, those recommendations were passed to the board and still viable recommendations that you're following within the office. Correct, sir. Thank you. And so I just wanted to make sure that we were talking about the same thing. There was an RFP earlier this year, and the One minute. Through the Department of Property and Procurement, who handles, of course, those RFP processes. We concluded that process. We received two applications, and we determined that neither one of the applications sort of met the criteria and so we sort of we cancelled that RFP and in the meantime while we were looking at the integration of the application process into the already existing software portal and software application that we have we devised a new system a new process to ensure and maintain the integrity of the merit-based process the merit-based application process that is mandated but it is it is separate and apart we that RFP was cancelled okay very well and before my time expires I want to switch over to the LCA in your testimony you indicated that the OCR relies heavily on DLC administrative support including office space fiscal management human resources and of course given the importance of an independent and fully functional regulatory body of what is going to be considered the cannabis industry why hasn't there been more collaboration to establish their own space or infrastructure for the OCR how long is it going to take will this dependency last technically in perpetuity forever or are there plans for the OCR to become an independent entity at some point in time Horace

2:03:39 Graham assistant commissioner thank you senator focus the I think it is is something worth identifying that the DLC is in this position specifically to to lift up and bring the OCR to a position of independence in its operation to the extent that they can. And so right now what we are called on to do is to make sure that we minimize the challenges to them being

able to get up and running. So DLC has been fulfilling that role, and we anticipate that within an appropriate period of time that the OCR will indeed be able to grow to where it needs to maybe fly the coop. But we are in that position of nurturing and working together with them to make sure that they get to the goals that they have set. Thank you. Mr. Chair, if I may have your leniency just to wrap up, please. You're the last one for this round, so sure.

2:04:46 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. And thank you for your answer, Director Graham, because at the same time, while your role is relatively very critical and important to the growth and survivability of the OCR, we still want to be able to encourage them to get to that goal because we don't want the long-term hindrance to become a part of what the dlca already has to deal with within its parameters so i'm looking forward to making sure or assuring uh that that growth takes place so that the cannabis industry can start in the virgin islands because we're still at a halt uh thank you for the time mr chair yes and just to let everyone know my colleagues we have a second round uh mr kirk you can put five minutes on the clock for me as far as the sea to sail tracking system how is that conversation coming along um senator james that contract is still in legal review um and hopefully we will be able to get that pushed through signed to execution shortly I how long has it been on the legal review and do you have anyone you can reach out to have your your right time left fun little hand somebody to text I really want to know because I know it's a critical part of our system of cannabis industry I should say correct it is an integral part of the system that we're building here and that the

2:06:34 contract has been in review prior to my arrival here at the OCR so it has been a while okay well that's good enough but we still want to have an idea of how long it has been in legal review and then you mentioned that you're working with division of personnel to ensure that all paperwork will be properly vetted and approved specifically for OCR enforcement division enforcement enforcement enforcement and you went on to say that you have a staff of approximately four including two supervisory positions can you break down how you would be able to achieve this by district and if you have finalized what what the cost or what the salary would be?

2:07:25 So, and I know that your colleague, Senator Francis, will agree that enforcement is important. And you know, we did, we have spoken about this before this body before in July when we were here. It is important. And part of the, part of the delay has been making sure that our paperwork with personnel is appropriate for the work that these folks will be doing. And so at the moment, what it's looking like to start is that we will have two enforcement team members per district, so two in St. Thomas, St. John, and two in St. Croix.

2:08:12 And so there will be a supervisor in each district. That's sort of how this set up. Obviously longer term we would have a bigger enforcement team. I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done. But the salaries for the starting enforcement agents is \$67,000. And the lead agent would be 70, and the deputy director would be 75.

2:08:47 So my question to you, as far as POS, have you or anyone on your teams had a conversation with POS? And go ahead, as far as POS. Well, if we've had a conversation with them regarding something in particular or whether these POS are POS certified. getting your enforcement division in place and getting some level of assistance and understanding of how you would like to see conducted getting individuals on board any policies that need to be reviewed so um we have not had a conversation with post specifically about policies we have been working uh certainly with the goal of that the first the first set of enforcement team members will already be post-certified, and so we are also working in having conversations with VIPD and making sure that we have the appropriate training.

2:09:43 We have had conversations with other jurisdictions in the states and the mainland concerning their training and utilizing their best practices and utilizing their already experienced cannabis uh team members to make sure that we appropriately create policies for the virgin islands as well the reason why i ask when we are fully on board with moving the cannabis industry online right i really don't want to hear officers saying well that's not our responsibility listen it needs to be some level of standardization or training so when they come through the police academy because we know for sure four individuals in your enforcement division will not be able to handle a population of approximately 90,000 people. Of course everyone will not be using cannabis however individuals will be calling 9-1-1 and other people regarding cannabis usage and we want to make sure that when they do apprehend those individuals that they're in the right and we don't have these cases going to the judicial system and then they're being thrown out because it has been handled incorrectly and I know that's beyond you but that conversation needs to be had I would like to say to your point Senator James absolutely it is critical and I can say without equivocation for sure that in the time since I have been here not only is DLC enforcement director he's been a tremendous resource for OCR and I think I can safely say he will continue to be that as well but we have also had conversations with the Virgin Islands Police Department and Acting Commissioner Brooks and I think I think we as I mentioned in my testimony we really are building sort of a coalition here regarding this and we are working so that we are all on the same page because my four folks is just not enough and there will always be need for collaboration and there will be overlap. So we are taking that very seriously and working towards that.

- 2:11:54 Thank you for placing that on the record. My time was called. I will proceed with the next round. We will start with Senate President Francis and we will have a three-minute round. Francis, you recognize. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I heard your time call louder than mine, so I don't know what's going on here. Thank you for the opportunity. So I know we just talked a little bit about enforcement there and, you know, just this whole contemplation about the legalization, you know, that have always been my Achilles heel in respect to ensuring that we do have appropriate enforcement in place, moving forward as well as education so I know that you spoke about the you started the issuance of a license did you indicate that which license any license have any license the medicinal side of things the individual cards that has started is that's coming with a fee yes it does so is there a mechanism how How much revenues have been raised thus far on that side of the house?
- 2:13:10 I would have to pull that up, but it's less than \$1,000. I mean, we have two certified practitioners. Let's see if I can do this real quickly. That's \$500. We have two pending applications. That's another \$500. Okay, \$1,000. And then \$50 for the one registered medical patient card and another \$50 for the two non-residents. So you do have a mechanism by which you're collecting revenues, or that's being done through the LCA? The LCA is collecting those revenues and conducting the transactions, the depository transactions. We do have, you know, all of the appropriate charge codes through the Department of Finance so that it's all tabulated correctly.
- 2:13:52 It's coded and represented that it's collected on the behalf of OCR? Yes, sir. So that you'll be able to track it moving forward? Yes, sir. And I know we touched a little bit in terms of the testing of laboratory. What are we doing in that respect or how are we building the case to ensure that we have the appropriate testing of laboratory responsibility in place? Senator Francis, I have been working with DPP, Department of Property and Procurement. By mandate, we are to put the testing facilities out to RFP and then see what kind of response we get.
- 2:14:33 But I also have been working with Department of Health to make sure that we, the government, have a quality assurance lab available to us. So we're working on that as well. So the RFP hopefully will come out. I think they're a little tied up, you know, this month. But we're working on that process, and hopefully that RFP will be out within a matter of weeks as well for the testing facilities. So at this point, what would you identify as your greatest challenge moving forward? If you don't have any, that's fine, but if you do, I'd like to hear it. My greatest challenge, I'm going to say the same thing that every government agency says to you guys it's funding and staffing um you know the more funding i have and the more staffing that i'm able to to obtain would certainly be put me miles ahead of of where we need to be but at this point it'll be more so staffing and funding because you do have some funding that's available to you correct i do but it's being expended very quickly so money go fast Yes.
- 2:15:49 Correct. In the real world. Many times. Correct. All right. Again, I thank you for your testimony. I truly believe that it's important that we continue to be a partner in this effort. You know, I know that we have, this train has already left the station and I think it's important that we're able to make sure that we're able to see some benefits from it. And also, we in this institution want to be in the support role to make sure that that happens.
- 2:16:23 So, thank you. And whatever we could do, please feel free to continue to knock on our doors in that effort. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you, Senate President Francis. Before I get to Senator Alma Francis-Heiliger and Senator Diane Capehart, I would quickly like to ask, have you had a chance to get that information from me as far as how much has been expended thus far pursuant to the passage of Act 8680, the \$1 million appropriation? So currently we have approximately \$861,000 available still out of that \$1 million that was appropriated in Act 8680.
- 2:17:11 And the amount that has been expended, what that has been used for? We have used it for... Let's make it easier, right? Yep. I'm requesting that you send me that information. Okay. But I'm happy to know that you have funds available, and I'm assuming that the remaining funds, You're not you haven't exhausted all your funds. We want you to use it. We use it wisely And I'm assuming everything is already itemized. So when you send me that information Send us information with everything itemized how much has been expended and the list goes on so we can be able to follow and Know when you need some more money All right Senator Alma Francis Heiliger you're recognized for your three minutes thank you so much good afternoon once again to my colleagues good afternoon to the testifiers camera media thank you there you go good afternoon once again to my colleagues to the testifiers to the people of the territory um one of the things that was discussed earlier was the potential shifting of marijuana to a different schedule, which would have helped reduce some of the regulations. If that happens, I know you shared that there might be some discussion in December.
- 2:18:47 If that happens, do you see that as a plus or a negative potential for our industry here and the potential for revenue generation in the territory? good afternoon again senator francis heiliger thank you i um you know i struggle to think of how it would negatively impact the industry i think there are a lot of challenges born out of the fact that it is still a schedule one drug um i think that it it you know it provides lots of additional obstacles and hurdles to those wanting to, for example, have the opportunity to have their business interests financed traditionally. And so I think with the potential

for rescheduling at the federal level, I think it certainly opens up many avenues for additional enterprise and additional business opportunities for folks.

2:19:55 see that as a plus for us. Okay, thank you. As it relates to enforcement, I know there's a situation where we are going to be issuing cards, identification, different certifications. What happens if people don't follow the rules and regulations? Like, say, if somebody's allowed to grow X amount of plants, they grow more than that. They try to sell. Like, what are some of ramifications do they get additional chances um they might get a slap on the wrist a warning does the certification get taken away what are some of the rules and regulations around people not always following one minute you have put out senator francis heiliger that is another great question uh and the we are working through those ideas right now um obviously we have the ability to articulate fines and articulate penalties, but exactly what that looks like and what those fines and penalties will be has yet to be determined, and that's a conversation I think that the advisory board, the cannabis advisory board will be taking under great consideration and making sure that we do it in a way that is fair to people but also incentivizes them to stay uh compliant and to stay within the bounds of the law and the rules okay thank you so much i think i heard my time was called thank you mr chair for the time senator if you want to ask another question feel free to do so oh okay you're being generous today

2:21:42 i feel so we have up until two o'clock we have time okay well i i wanted to know in regards to the the software program i think you said it was tyler tech um how did the process for selecting this organization go and are they familiar or are they in the industry of the cannabis industry to say that they could create software that could potentially accommodate for the things that we want or what we need as well as do you foresee that you might have to as the our as you continue to grow and build and we expand do you see you might have to go into other types of software or equipment in order to keep building ocr um thanks thank you senator i i can't speak to the conversation that was held prior to the contract being executed but I can tell you that in my time while I have been here working with Tyler Tech I think that they are great partners to work with they are very amenable they are very accessible they are very responsive and I know to be true that they also they are very much um they have many other cannabis clients governmental clients regulators etc uh in other jurisdictions in the states and not just you know not just one other clients they have several uh other clients that that that they work in this industry and so we have been leveraging their experience in other cannabis jurisdictions legalized cannabis jurisdictions to assist us as we continue to build out this process. So I have good faith that they will continue to remain a good partner for us. Well, I'm happy to hear that response

2:23:41 because I'm not one for us trying to reinvent the wheel, especially with us trying to venture into this. I'm glad to know that they've already been involved in this industry and probably bring some additional knowledge to make sure help us to build ours as well thank you so much mr chair for the additional question thank you senator senator diane capehart but before i get to you uh quick question positive ta nelson can't escape he's a policy advisor for cannabis or something right correct i believe that is his title that's me good bridging but we're gonna give you a break what role is he playing right now and how is he collaborating with OCR to make sure that things go smoothly because you know he has he's basically the founder of this conversation and whole industry for sure and and he certainly he and I I mean we speak every week many many times a week He is usually my first phone call when I'm sort of researching issues and trying to ascertain sort of the context and the background of those issues, how we arrived at certain decisions. So he's been a fantastic resource for me personally and the OCR in general. And he sits in the meetings with us and he provides lots of feedback and guidance.

2:25:05 So I count that as another good relationship that we have with the OCR. very knowledgeable and passionate individual, too passionate sometimes. Senator Diane Capehart, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ms. Moorhead, you mentioned in your testimony today that the Office of Cannabis Regulation has been fostering collaboration with other government partner agencies and you listed them but one department I didn't see is Department of Agriculture because you have the licensing consumer affairs a lieutenant governor's office finance property and procurement police department division of personnel justice IRB planning and natural resources but no agriculture, why not?

2:26:03 I should have said in my testimony, but not limited to. In actual fact, there are a few departments that I have found in the government that sort of we don't have some sort of need to work with, and Department of Agriculture is simply an oversight. It's not intentional. One of the first offices that I reached out to was Department of Agriculture when I started here. And so we know that there's lots of cross or overlapping of ideas and work around hemp and cannabis together. So naturally we do work together and that was simply an oversight on my part. But thank you for calling that.

2:26:54 Okay. Okay, great. Then also, under your goals, you mentioned about the business license and have focus on dispensaries and the cultivation licenses, because they are two most complicated application process. We are not ignoring the opportunities and requirements of other licensing. And then you mentioned, due to the lengthy evaluation and

investigatory process, how long can you just tell us how long this really takes one minute as you mentioned that it has a lengthy evaluation time and then also to give us a timeline also as how long does it take for someone to get the sacramental organization identification cards I thank you again I will start with the last question first the sacramental organization cards that process is already online it really is quite an easy process the thing that takes the longest in truth is confirming payment at the moment you must submit your payment by mail to the DLCA office so it's just we had a little incident with the postal service and so getting Getting the payments in and being able to confirm that a person who has applied paid is actually the longest process, but it's very, very simple and it's not that complicated.

2:28:29 It could be done if I got payment, if I received payment today by Friday certainly that they could be, they could have their card. Again it's all digital, it's online as long as their applications are complete and all All of the documents that they must upload are valid documents. So we do, you know, verify that the documents submitted are valid. And then it's pretty, it's pretty quick. So it could take as short as a week or, you know, maybe two weeks if, just depending again, usually most of the time the issue is confirming payment. Now back to what was the Lenti evaluation. Oh, yes. The reason I say that is because, again, if you look at the rules and regulations which came out of the law, there are lots of documents required.

2:29:28 There's more so than any other license and all of those other things. So there's sort of a basic license application requirements, and then there are additional requirements for those two licenses in particular. And then by law we must wait at least 60 days after the applications become available before we can close the application process. So that's at least 60 days from the day that that starts. So we still have a couple months. And then we don't know if we'll get three applications or if we'll get 30.

2:30:04 They will be sizable application packets. And so then we have to train the evaluators and make sure that they understand how to use the rubric and all of these other things, and then evaluate those packages. And so that's why I keep referencing that it is potentially quite complicated and perhaps lengthy. It won't take up to a year, though. No, no, ma'am. And then I think one other question, if I did.

2:30:32 I'm going to wrap up. Just give you a notice. Yeah, sorry. it was just one other question as it pertains to your compromise enforcement staff you said you you're going to have four can you tell us would you have two on st. Croix two on st. Thomas how do you plan to do this enforcement division as one territory different I am so to start with we will have two in the district of st. Thomas st. John and two in the district of st. Croix and we will have a supervisor in one district and then the deputy director in the other district and obviously again that's it's not enough but that's what we'll start with and we will certainly I envision leaning on the expert advice of our DLC enforcement director and his team and VIPD you know just where needed and how we can collaborate to see you know if they can fill any of the gaps until we are able to build that team out further thank you mr. chair for the additional time. Senator Angel Borges, you're recognized for your three minutes.

2:31:57 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to talk about the illicit market. You highlighted the importance of bringing on legacy operators into the legal market. However, you also mentioned the lack of specific enforcement and the plan to actually implement it or guide the agencies regarding legacy activity and cannabinoid hemp. So what are your plans for enforcement strategy between the legacy and illicit markets? I mean I know that there is supposed to be coordination with the VIPD, Department of Health, OCR, and any other supporting agencies to ensure smooth operations and enforcement. But how are you all communicating to delineate between the two as to who has specific rights or jurisdiction in specific cases when the law is broken, whether it's in the legacy side or the illicit side? Have you all determined who's in charge of what? Senator Bulkus, thank you for that question. So I think that I am not a law enforcement expert. And I surely don't want to, at this stage, tell law enforcement what they need to be doing. I sort of go to law enforcement and have them tell me what our best options are.

2:33:44 I'm not saying that. I'm not asking you to be the law enforcement officer. I'm asking you if, in fact you've had discussions with all of the stakeholders to determine who has jurisdiction over what specific case that might arise concerning the cannabis industry? So we know that the criminal infractions related to cannabis remains under the purview of the virgin islands police department um we also know that again that this industry in general is um let me rephrase how has the ocr met with vipd department of health and any other agency that is helping with your enforcement efforts or or planning to strategize those in enforcement efforts for the illicit and the legacy market yes those conversations have started however we are go ahead how many times have you met i personally have met with time virgin islands police department once um and we've had i've i've had conversations with Department of Health, I've had conversations with other law enforcement agencies, and had conversations with other members of the Virgin Islands Police Department, as well as my enforcement resources and experts that are coming into our fold on our side, so that we can start to frame what that looks like. I've also been having conversations with other law enforcement members, team members in other jurisdictions in the states to see how they do.

- 2:35:47 For example, California, which has a massively growing illicit market problem at the moment. So, you know, we are looking at those kind and having those kinds of conversations to determine how we establish policies for just the question that you're asking. who is responsible and for what in what circumstances etc okay well answer your question better sir not particularly but through the chair to director Moorhead to please submit a listing of all of the meetings that she's had with all law enforcement and stakeholders to include Department of Health, the IPD, and any other supporting agency concerning enforcement strategy for the legacy and illicit markets. Thank you, sir. Will do. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Boquez this question is I don't know it's his licensing and consumer affairs or you miss Moorhead and when you find someone who has not followed the law of the procedures and you have to find them do you have this already where you have the dollar amount for the fines or this would be something that you working on presently have you thought about that and because you may potentially have a
- 2:37:39 violator how do you find this person what's the dollar amount that they would incur that cost madam chair we are working on the the I'll call it a schedule of fines and penalties we're working on on what that looks like and and what shape that will take certainly using the existing fee schedule that has been approved for licensing in general as a guide and sort of modeling some of the the fine and penalty procedures off of other agencies such as DLCA and then that goes through the cannabis advisory board and they will sort of determine what what they think is the best practice and sign off on that but that should that's in the works okay great and we have three islands well technically four so comes a lot it is law and then here it is what about the inter island exportation or importation is that is that going to happen will we have a department the marine unit doing you know inspections enforcement have you guys thought about that yet another great question we we have had some conversations with some other law enforcement agencies and federal partners the trick of course is that the marine
- 2:39:27 waters between st thomas and st croix are uh jurisdictionally a problem um and so you know for example between st thomas and water island or st john is very different than talking about transporting uh those kinds of products between st thomas and st croix um we are It's not an easy answer, to be honest, and we're looking for, the state of Massachusetts or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, there was a lawsuit filed, the islands off the coast of Massachusetts filed a lawsuit because they were technically not allowed to transport through the waters as well. And so they're having a very similar type of issue. So we're looking at that lawsuit very closely, and we're looking at what they are doing in Massachusetts regarding that issue to see sort of, you know, they might sort of, you know, they might break that seal first for us in terms of precedent, in terms of the law, and then see how we can accommodate here and what we can do in speaking with Customs and Border Patrol and VIPD, again, who has jurisdiction. So I don't have a complete answer for you, but that is an issue that we are looking into.
- 2:40:47 Yeah, and Senator, if I may add to that, your question that you asked earlier about fines and penalties, one of the things that I really appreciate about the rules and regs is that they're quite comprehensive, and I think anyone having the opportunity to look at them under section 777-34, it outlines some of those anticipated fines for unlawful acts and violations and penalties and so I mean the range from illegal dispensing or selling of cannabis, unlawful retail or selling of cannabis to even if unlawful use of a patient medical card. So there's a number of key indicators and what the violations and then what the fines associated with those would be I'm certain that as we move along in the process that the OCR will have opportunities to revise to update and to improve on any of those fines but they are they are enumerated there thank you thank you thank you and I will wrap up with my three minutes and then we will have some comments closing comments and we will go on recess my question though ocr will have access to a lot of data as far as being able to analyze this data i'm not asking you to create new positions and do it immediately when the money starts to roll in and the economy is booming or the industry is booming we can look into that but as far as utilizing other governmental agencies as far as the
- 2:42:41 Bureau of Economic Research do you think that that's doable as far as helping you with with data and research specifically with dealing with dollars and cents not dealing with cannabis the actual plant but the economics of it senator James I love that question, and I will say I welcome the opportunity to work with a department like the Bureau of Economic Research. I think I mentioned it in the testimony briefly, I think that the smart thing for the government of the Virgin Islands to do is to have a measured rollout, right, where we then have the time and ability to assess the industry, assess how it's working, assess the supply and demand, and make sure that the market can support what we are trying to do. The ultimate goal for the government, of course, is to be able to generate revenue and we want to optimize our ability to do that and use good data to make good decisions as a policy maker.
- 2:43:51 I hope Government House is listening, I hope T.A. Nelson is listening, I hope Mr. Kevin Williams is listening, and all of them up there. Because you will need that help in the interim until the industry starts to flourish, because we want to make sure that we're going based off of data, and not because Uncle Tom says so, because emotional waves in the

community, it has to be about data, you know, so Senator, if I may, the Government House and all of the other participants, the drafters of legislation, those of you guys even within the chambers that have been working on it, one of the things that you have to keep in mind is that that process already puts that in line. There is clear indication that a measured approach, the rollout of an initial tranche of licenses and then evaluate to determine how those are working within the industry and then another offering of opportunities for licenses, that is already codified, that's already set up in the process. And I think that you would be pleased to know that that is exactly what this process that OCR and DLC and so on have been working towards, is to make sure that that happens. And we've been, we had good collaboration with Government House, with the board, with Positive TA Nelson and those, we do have those excellent working relationships that's leading to that.

2:45:24 But bear in mind, talking about data, I'm not taking anything away from anyone who has been involved in the conversation, but basically a nerd. When they see numbers and this and that and this and that, they can say, okay, in the next five years, da-da-da-da, that's what we want. somebody like positive Nelson who passed the bill and we're not we're not taking anything away from him you know because I have the utmost respect for him but data analysts that's what I'm basically referring to and that's why I asked about the collaboration with the Bureau of Economic Research because that's one Bureau that does a lot but we don't really hear much on it's like a quiet agency but I just want to make sure that there's some form of collaboration as far as theater and the economic impact of this industry point of information senator Dianne Capehart thank you thank you mr. chair this is for mr. Graham presently there's a concern of retail businesses that are selling marijuana illegally. Tell us how DLCA is regulating or enforcing these illegal sales.

2:46:43 Senator Horace Graham, Assistant Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. Very good question. The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs issues a hemp retailer's license. And, as such, that hemp retailers license is really designed for those individuals who are selling products that have less than 0.3 percent THC by volume. We also, in that process, have issued a specific set of rules, not rules, but terms and conditions that govern what they are able to sell. When we find individuals violating that, in conjunction with the Department of Health, We have confiscated hemp-based products that do not meet the standard. We presently are regularly, I should say, doing initiatives that allow us to take those items off of the shelves. It is a very difficult and challenging process, but we know for sure that the hope that we are doing, the actions that we are taking are in the hopes of making sure that we maintain a very clear process and separate out what hemp is doing to what ultimately the adult use component is doing. We don't want to mingle them in any way. We want to make sure that they are clearly defined.

2:48:05 So, this is my last question. We have September · well, we are basically in the middle of So, two weeks in September, October, November, December, so basically three months remaining in a year, short term goals, from now until December 31st, 2024. Not the pie in the sky dreams, those are the long term goals, short term goals.

2:48:36 At least three of them. Perfect. Thank you, sir. biggest three getting a few business licenses out right completing that application process completing that whole process and being able to have licensed testing facilities being able to issue a few dispensary and cultivation licenses and getting that aspect of the industry up and running I those are my three short-term goals and I say that because that encompasses a lot of other stuff on in the behind the scenes and making sure that we have things in place but that for certain is our our big goal and I expect I hope I'm planning to have those licenses issued by the end of December so that was a good question all right and so far you have been on point as far as a user name for instagram but when i went on facebook i'm not seeing it okay let's see so while we're we're waiting on that we will allow you both to make some comments i will have dlca start off with their closing remarks and in the closing remarks of the director of OCR she will get that information to me as well no problem thank you so much senators senators for this opportunity the dlca has been working hand in hand with the OCR for several years now and the approach that we've been taking is a strong collaborative effort our goal is to work with them so that they can grow and become what we anticipate the industry would contribute to the Virgin Islands. It is our hope that as we work with them and as we provide the services, that they will continue to flourish under us and ultimately be able to move on to bigger and better things. Senator, I want to take this time to thank the men and women of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs who continue to render support, that is through our Business Office and especially through our Enforcement Division, and ultimately thank the folks who have really put out significant effort in bringing this to fruition. We continue to support them, and in whatever way that we are able to, we will continue to do so. Thank you so much for your time.

2:51:16 Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Graham for being here with us today for this block. Director Mohed? Yes, sir. So the Instagram handle is at usvi.ocr. The Facebook is facebook.com slash usviocr. I'm not sure if it should be searchable, but if it's not searchable, and it's USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations, so facebook.com slash USVI OCR. You can access that. There's the little Facebook icon on the website at the bottom of the page. If you forget or you can't find it, you can

click and it should take you straight through to the Facebook page if you can't find it for some reason.

- 2:52:04 Any closing remarks? I just would like to reiterate our gratitude for allowing us to come before this committee today to have this discussion. I think it is an important discussion. I welcome always the comments, the questions, the suggestions from you and your colleagues. I think that we are making great progress towards seeing the realization of Act 8680 and all that that encompasses in terms of having a thriving cannabis industry here in the Virgin Islands. And most important of all, thank you for giving us the space and the time to make sure that we get it right for the public health and safety of the residents of the Virgin Islands and our visitors who would like to partake in the industry.
- 2:52:55 So thank you again. You're welcome. And I found the Facebook page. I went on the website, clicked on the icon, and I went to the Facebook page. So thank you for placing that on the record. Thank you. As far as block one, block one has come to an end, but it's not the end of the day. We have block two. Block two, we will be considering a bill. But until then, we are gonna go in recess for approximately 30 minutes.
- 2:53:28 And the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture is hereby now in recess. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- 2:55:08 We'll be right back. Let's get started. Thank you. [3 such phrases repeated 16 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:03:08 We'll be right back. Thank you. Let's get started. [3 such phrases repeated 24 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:15:08 Thank you. We'll be right back. Let's get started. [3 such phrases repeated 27 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:28:38 The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture is hereby back on the record. Mr. Clerk we will now proceed with block two but before we get into the nitty gritty of today's discussion can you please read the remaining of the agenda for today yes mr. cheer block two the committee will consider bill 35-0203 an act amending title 19 Virgin Islands code part three hold on one second you you said the wrong bill number say the word again the committee will consider bill number 35-0283 an act amending title 19 virgin islands code part 3 chapter 34 the virgin islands cannabis use sponsored by senators donna fred gregory and senator javon e james senior Invited testifiers, Ms. Joanne Moorhead, Executive Director of the USVI Office of Cannabis Regulations, Mr. Kevin Williams, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Governor, and Ms. Key Walker Esquire, Managing Attorney of the Walker Legal Group, Christianstead St. Croix. Mr. Chair, that concludes the reading of the agenda. Mr. Clerk, do we have any correspondence to be read into the record? No, Mr. Chair. All right, we will take a quick recess while we deal with some technical difficulties. The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture is now in recess.
- 3:30:58 We'll be right back. Thank you. Let's get started. [3 such phrases repeated 30 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 3:45:58 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture is now back on the record.
- 3:49:05 We're out of recess. We, before we went on recess, we had the reading of the agenda for block number two. And recently we realized that there is correspondence to be read into the record. So Mr. Clerk, if you can read that into the record. Yes, Mr. Chair. Letter dated September 4, 2024. Honorable Javon E. James, Chair on Economic Development and Agriculture, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, 3022 Estate Golden Rock, St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00820. Dear Senator James, thank you for your invitation to testify on Bill 35-0283, an act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 111, Chapter 34 of the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on this important legislative matter i am pleased to confirm that attorney keywalker will represent the office of the governor and provide testimony during the hearing attorney walker has been extensively involved in the review and revision of the cannabis act amendments and will be a bit will be able to offer comprehensive insights into the proposed changes we look forward to a constructive dialogue and are confident that Attorney Walker's testimony will be instrumental in clarifying the details and implications of the amendments. Please let us know if there are any additional details or preparations required on our part. We are eager to assist in any way to ensure a productive session. Thank you for your consideration and for including us in this crucial legislative process.
- 3:51:08 Sincerely, Kevin A. Williams, Sr., Chief of Staff. Thank you. Mr. Chair, that concludes the reading of the correspondence. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The committee will now consider the following bill, Bill No. 35-0283, and Acomending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, for the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use, sponsored by Senator Donna Freight-Gregory. Who speaks to this bill?

- 3:51:37 I do. Senator Dona Frey-Gregory, you may proceed with your introduction of Bill number 35-0283. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon again. And this afternoon I offer Bill number 35-0283, an act amended Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, called the virgin islands cannabis use act and that act was passed in the 34th legislature and it's act number 8680 and it was adopted in december of 2022 and enacted in january of 2023 basically what this particular bill is seeking to do is to clarify some of the areas in the bill which means that they require amendments so basically we're amending the the initial act number 8680 for consistency within the legislation to ensure successful implementation of the cannabis use act in the territory this measure that's before us today is pretty straightforward, and it cleans up, like I said earlier, typos, inconsistencies, and adds clarification to the cannabis use law. As the office of the OCR was working on developing the policies for the cannabis regulations in the territory, they noted specifically to us that there were some inconsistencies in the law and asked that we assist them with cleaning up the measure. I am basically involved in this work at this particular time because I served as president in the 34th legislature and we basically passed this measure in the 34th legislature.
- 3:53:41 So the concerns that were highlighted by OCR, there were some that they shared with us that we did not agree with. So we left them on the table. However, the majority of them were of concern that required clarification. And hence the reason for bill number 35, that's 0283, that's before us today. And what I will do, colleagues, is I'm going to ask my chief of staff to share with you the sections of the bill so we could be clear as to what's happening today that uh that requires the cleanup and the addressing of the clarity around the measure thank you for the time mr chair and i'm also asking you to support of course this measure that's before us so we can really move forward with the implementation here in the virgin islands and um the adoption of the or the empty uh the uh what would it what would we call it the making the necessary changes to the policy as a result of these changes thank you mr chair for the time thank you madam finance chair and thank you for being here and juggling all these things at the same time really do appreciate it as far as today's agenda we will get into some testimonies We will proceed with Executive Director Moorhead, but before we do, just place your name and title on the record. And after you do so, the same for the next testifier.
- 3:55:17 Joanne Moorhead, Executive Director of the Office of Cannabis Regulation. Next testifier. Good afternoon, Chairman Key Walker, Esquire, on behalf of the Office of the Governor. Thank you both for being here today. We will proceed with the reading of the testimony, starting with Executive Director Moorhead. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
- 3:55:50 Good afternoon, Senator Javon E. James Sr., Chair of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, other members of this committee, other members of the 35th Legislature present, fellow testifiers, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Joanne Moorhead, Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation or OCR, a subsidiary division of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. I am joined today by my OCR office assistant, Ms. Lynne Marie McCarthy. Thank you again for the opportunity today to provide testimony before this body on Bill 35-0283, an act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act, sponsored by Senators Donna Fred Gregory and Sen. Javon E. James The Virgin Islands Office of Cannabis Regulation was first created pursuant to Act No. 8167, the Virgin Islands Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act, which was a direct result of a 2014 referendum whereby 56.5% of the Virgin Islands voting public voted to support the licensing and regulation of medicinal marijuana, patients, caregivers, cultivators and distribution centers. one year after the passage of Act 8167, the 34th legislature enacted the more comprehensive Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act, Act 8680. The Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act recognized the need to expand the cannabis industry in order to provide additional opportunities for employment and business ownership from Virgin Islands residents, alleviate social injustices experienced by persons subjected to the criminal justice system in matters related to the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana, it also recognized cultural and sacramental uses of cannabis and will
- 3:57:52 generate much needed tax revenues for the territory. This cannabis use act further establishes a holistic regulated system for the cultivation, manufacture and sale of cannabis for adult medicinal and sacramental use. Governed by the Cannabis Advisory Board, a body of 11 persons appointed by the governor and approved by the legislature, the Office of Cannabis Regulation has the executive authority to implement and administer the provisions in Act 8680, including but not limited to promulgating rules and regulations related to the cultivation, manufacture, sale, dispensary, testing, licensing, and use of cannabis, prescriptive use of cannabis, and sacramental use. I joined the Office of Cannabis Regulation at the end of May 2024, shortly after the Cannabis Advisory Board approved and adopted the rules and regulations in April. With those final important guidelines in place, the OCR has been working diligently to establish the framework through which Act 8680 will be implemented. During this work, naturally, we have had occasion to pour through Act 8680 and recognize that there are some areas which could benefit from clarification.
- 3:59:24 So we thank you for this opportunity to discuss this bill, number 35-0283, which is the first set of amendments proposed to the legislation. Looking specifically at the draft on blue that was provided to the OCR, we would like to address the

following sections of the proposed amendments. Section 1B1A, we agree with your proposed amendments in this section but would like to request additional language that allows for the ex officio commissioners to be able to name a designee if they so choose. Section 1G, we agree with the proposed changes to this section but would respectfully request that the date be amended to January 1, 2027, given that we will not have operational dispensaries until 2025, and would like to have the opportunity to suggest any changes to the number of licenses using data-based evidence collected for at least one full year's operations.

4:00:30 Section 1L3, we agree with the changes in this section but would like to also add, quote, designated caregivers after the first instance of qualified patients in the first sentence to maintain consistency of changes in other sections of these amendments. For example, see also number 8 of this subsection. And in the last appearance before this committee, the OCR testified on some proposed changes to the legislation, some of which were not adopted in this draft. Today we would like to call attention to the omission of one particular section that we believe deserves reconsideration for adoption.

4:01:12 In section 783N, the adoption of the changes proposed to the language specifying qualifying patients as opposed to the current use of employees would provide greater clarity and specificity consistent with other changes found in this draft. In conclusion, with the continued support of the 35th legislature and this committee, I am certain that the hard work begun by the Office of Cannabis Regulation will continue at great pace so that we may finally realize the full benefits of a thriving medical and adult use cannabis industry here in the Virgin Islands of the United States. I would like to extend a public thank you again to the Cannabis Advisory Board Chair Dr. Kathryn Ken and other members of the board for their guidance, the Office of the Governor, specifically Special Advisor Honorable Positive T.A. Nelson, members of this body for their support and the DLCA team for their unwavering support of the OCR. I thank you again for the opportunity today to share with your committee our position regarding Bill 35-0283 and stand ready to answer any questions arising.

4:02:23 Thank you. Attorney Kee Walker. Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairperson, members of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, other members of the 35th legislature of the Virgin Islands, and the listening and viewing audience. I am attorney Key Walker and appear before you to testify regarding the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act and proposed amendments to the act contained within bill number 35-0283. Currently I serve as a legal advisor to the office of the governor regarding the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act. I would like to make clear from the outset of my testimony that the work of my office on this matter was limited to legal issues surrounding the language of the enabling legislation and rules and regulations. Therefore my testimony will not describe the current status of the cannabis program in its territory and I will refer questions regarding the rollout of the cannabis program to members of the cannabis advisory board or other representatives from the executive branch. Bill number 35-0283 is a comprehensive set of amendments that will strengthen and fill in gaps to correct various oversights within the Act that passed the 34th legislature on December 30th, 2022 and was signed into law by Governor Bryan on January 18th, 2023. As most members in this body recall, the final drafting and negotiation over language for the Act occurred during a very compressed time period during the final days of the 34th legislature. As such, there are some typographical errors, minor inconsistencies and omissions within the law that this current bill addresses. Examples of those are found in the first page of the bill wherein the definitions of terms like applicants and card holder have been amended to include individuals or entities that were mistakenly omitted. Other definitions have been revised for clarity such as the definition of disqualifying felony

4:04:21 offense and sacramental use in section 777 of the act a proposed change has been made to the description of the composition of the cannabis advisory board that governs and oversees the chief regulatory body of the cannabis industry the office of cannabis regulation or ocr as it's most commonly known the subsection b of section 777 has been revised to ensure that commissioners of health agriculture and licensing and consumer affairs do not needlessly complete the confirmation process before the legislature and to include a requirement that the farmer appointed to the board be recommended by the local food and farm council rather than by the Commissioner of Agriculture additionally section 777 subsection B includes three additional paragraphs numbers 6 7 and 8 that provide board members with legal indemnification for their official actions in language describing their protected actions and communications.

4:05:23 These important changes bring the CAB in line with other boards within the Government of the Virgin Islands. The proposed change to Section 777F, described at the top of Page 4 of the bill, would extend the timeline for the OCR to become self-sufficient from taxes and fees generated from two years after the enactment to two years after promulgation of the rules and regulations. This promulgation occurred on May 4, 2024, giving the OCR until May 4, 2026 to become financially self-sufficient. This is a far more reasonable timeframe considering that licenses and permits have not yet begun to be issued. Section 77H directs that the annual report from the director of the OCR be submitted to the

Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture rather than the Committee on Health, which is an appropriate change given the major economic and agricultural components of this legislation. The proposed change to Section 7-7-K removes the mandate that the OCR be responsible for collaborating with the Industrial Hemp Commission on Enforcement of the Cultivation Manufacturer Sale and Use of Hemp, which is federally defined as cannabis items containing less than 0.3% of the primary psychoactive component within cannabis, THC.

4:06:44 This collaborative enforcement mandate, while well-intentioned in terms of government efficiency, was not funded by the legislation and could have caused regulatory confusion. A notable proposed change to Section 779 of the Act would reduce the distance requirement of any display or transfer of cannabis from a cruise ship dock in Charlotte or Mali, Haven Site or Crown Bay in St. Thomas from 1,000 feet to 250 feet. I will note, however, that this bill language seems to have an inconsistency by leaving the distance requirement from cruise ship ports in Fredrickset and Cruz Bay at 500 feet. These distances should be harmonized and I recommend making the distance requirement 250 feet for all cruise ship docks in the territory. This should be corrected by further amendment. Other changes in this bill seek to harmonize all of the various distance requirements to 250 feet, thereby creating more consistency. The proposed changes to section 783 of the act includes the removal of subsection C, which under current language implies that only qualified patients have the rights described, which is not correct. Leaving these provisions in as enumerated rights to a specific group gives the impression that the general adult population over the age of 21 does not have these rights as well, which they should have. A proposed change to section 787F of the act, located at page five of the bill, would correct an oversight in the existing language that allows the OCR to issue additional licenses beyond the upper limits described in section 787, subsections B, C, and D.

4:08:26 The proposed change sensibly requires authorization of the legislature and approval of the governor to changes in the allowable number of licenses issued. Similarly, the proposed change to Section 793 would require legislative authorization for any changes to the unaffiliated third-party sourcing requirement and micro-cultivation sourcing requirement. This change would ensure that substantive changes are not made without the authorization of the legislature and the approval of the governor. In section 794D, a crucial correction is proposed that codifies that adult users, OCR enforcement personnel and other law enforcement personnel and registered visitors are permitted into the restricted access area of a cannabis dispensary, correcting and oversight. In section 795H, the proposed change would ensure that any cannabis research and development licensee that includes a cannabis testing facility not be allowed to sell any cannabis items thereby removing the potential conflict of interest of a testing facility testing its own products a proposed change to section 798 on sacramental use would require that the OCR maintain a confidential list of registered sacramental users so that law enforcement personnel and or cannabis businesses can easily verify the status of individuals authorized to cultivate under the sacramental use provisions of the Act. A proposed change to section 800 of the Act would wisely enable cannabis businesses or other business enterprises involved in cannabis research and development to be eligible for tax benefits provided under the UVI research and

4:10:12 Technology Park Corporation Act and under the Enterprise Zone Program Act, provided that these businesses would otherwise qualify for such benefits. This is an important incentive for interested cannabis businesses and investors to increase their economic activity in the territory by meeting the benefit requirements and job creation requirements of the tech park and or enterprise zone programs. It is important to note here that the act requires that all cannabis businesses be majority owned by long-time Virgin Islands residents, thereby eliminating the risk that this tax incentive provision would only benefit off-island entities or recent arrivals.

4:10:51 As cannabis business activities spread throughout the region and the world, it is important that our territory distinguish itself by attracting the level of financial investment and job creation required by the UVI Tech Park and Enterprise Zone programs. Finally, in Section 3 of this amendment, the amendment proposes that the term lengths of the Cannabis Advisory Board members who were appointed under the predecessor Medical Cannabis Patient Care Act begin anew at the date of enactment of the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act, which is January 18th, 2023. This proposed change removes any uncertainty about the term lengths of the current board members. At this time, I'd like to thank Senator Donna Fred Gregory for championing this effort through the 34th legislature and for sponsoring the current bill to correct some of the inconsistencies and omissions that were not intended. Thank you to all senators, and I remain available to answer any questions you may have.

4:11:52 Thank you, testifiers, for placing your testimonies on the record. In the essence of time, I will limit my commentary between line of questioning to zero. So we will proceed with three minutes for Senator Blighton. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon again to Attorney Kee Walker and E.D. Moorhead. And thank you so much for your testimonies.

- 4:12:26 this afternoon but basically um i want to thank the sponsor of the bill sponsor of the bills like the flagrant center javon james to bring it forward what the bill does it basically cleans up language building a gap in many areas and basically strengthens the bill moving forward because this is a very important serious one we must must assure that we do it right the first time let me ask though in respect to the testimony um attorney keywalker you spoke to many uh proposed changes to the bill because those changes basically um explains why those changes came on what the reason was and um i'm happy to see many of those changes for instance you spoke to the distance in terms of um 250 feet instead of having different uh distances between the island even as one territory which makes sense in my opinion and you also spoke to the cannabis use when it comes to um sacramental use and or other uses and the reason why it's important when it comes to law enforcement etc but can you answer this question for me please in respect to uh different uses are they going to be licensed, that individual carry for themselves when they get their license?
- 4:14:16 How does that work? Can you explain enough for me, please? Thank you for the question, Senator. There's essentially a registration and certification process. So I can't speak to the actual form of what that would look like. That's a question that's better directed to OCR, but ultimately there would be a way for OCR, its enforcement officers, and other law enforcement personnel to determine right away whether someone is an authorized user. And when you're talking about the sacramental use, because that involves cultivation, it's important that those users also be registered in some format, but in a way that also balances their privacy. So the amendments that have been proposed by Senators Donna Fred Gregory and Senator Javon James definitely strikes the balance that's needed for those users. Thank you for that and um Edie Moorhead can you speak to um uh the reason why you um ask time for senator bladen you can just ask your question and then i would have them answering it here time will just call oh sorry thank you so thank you so much you spoke to um 2027 instead of 2026 i believe with a expanding a time by a year what the average time based on you guys your research that it takes to go from uh once you have the dispensaries before you actually start um selling what the time frame and is that a reason why you're extending the time by a year can you speak to that please thank you senator blyden um the reason for requesting the extension on the time is because it it we don't anticipate having any open dispensaries before even at the earliest the summer of 2025 and that section of the act was requiring any changes to the number of licenses be based on data gathered and it just wouldn't give us enough time to have solid statistical evidence or solid data by which to request or change the numbers of licenses to come back to the legislature so we just were increasing the time to give us a full year's worth of of data
- 4:16:52 thanks for you francis master chair thank you for your agency and thank you for the time thank you thank you senator de graf your next three minutes uh thank you mr chair good afternoon colleagues good afternoon testifiers of your listening and present i have a couple of questions one i would just like uh explanation a little more in depth on i'll run through the merit-based application process in the beginning of the bill um what is that about the um the board for my reading is for ex officio ex officio voting members only uh section 790 b Two, you're striking and replacing a statement, the ownership of a micro-cultivation permit is not transferable.
- 4:17:49 Section 794.5, subsection H1, you're striking less than and inserting within and by striking 100 feet of a school. So you sound like you're striking within 100 feet of a school or putting within. So I'd like a little more clarification. And I'm just running through them. I'll go over them again. And section 800F, subsection C by striking 1,500 and inserting 100 for the fines. So could I get a little clarification on those? We could go back down to the merit-based application process. What actually is that process?
- 4:18:34 Which question would you like us to tackle first, Senator? I'm going back through it with you. I just wanted to get them out so Mr. Chair could hear the questions that I have. And then I'll just go back now. Demerit-based application process. What is that based on? Explain that a little more, please. Good afternoon, Senator DeGraff. Thank you for the question.
- 4:19:06 If I'm understanding you correctly, you're just asking for a little clarity on what the merit-based application process is? One minute. I'm sorry? Correct. Oh, yes. Yes. So the merit-based application in the act just is there to ensure that those persons or entities who receive licenses receive those licenses based on merit rather than some other form of scoring our application. So we created a system based on the requirements and fulfilling of the requirements so that each application is scored based on merit.
- 4:19:51 Okay, and then based on what I see with the board, there are four ex-officio voting members. How many members are voting members total? Thank you again. I believe there are five commissioners that would serve as ex-officio voting members, and the total board composition would be 11 people. Right. So only four votes. It wasn't five, it was four. Four ex-officio voting. Excuse me. I heard my time, Korg. I could just wrap these up, Mr. Chair. Sure.
- 4:20:32 There are five. Okay. I have one second, Director. Let the Senator finish his line of questioning. Well, I read that there are four ex-officio voting members and one commissioner who is an ex-officio. No, and then the board chair who is the OCR, I think, director. I couldn't find it right out of hand. But then also is a non-officio voting member. So is it four or

five? There would be five commissioners who are ex-officio members and have the ability to vote.

4:21:10 The executive director of the Office of Cannabis Regulation is the only other ex-officio member of the board, but that position is a non-voting position. Does that answer the question? Yes. Okay. So if I may, Mr. Chair, again, the board is comprised of the Commissioner of Department of Health, Agriculture, Licensing and Consumer Affairs are three, tourism, four, as ex officio voting members. That's four. Yes. Yes. Sorry. Yes. Four voting ex officio members.

4:21:50 Senator de Graaf. Senator de Graaf. Okay, so you have an even number. Yes, sir. No, I just wanted to make sure that you got your answer. Yes, yeah, I did. And like I said again with the, okay, well like I say four, with four then there isn't one to break a tie. But so then the others were the striking and adding the ownership of micro cultivation permits is not transferable. What does that mean? And that would be the last, okay? That would be the last. That would be fine, Mr. Chair.

4:22:26 Thank you, Senator. What that means is once you have qualified for that permit, you can't just hand it over to someone who has not been qualified or gone through the OCR process. So anyone who would obtain that permit would have to go through the OCR process. It cannot be transferred to someone else. Thank you. Thank you for your time, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator DeGraff. Senate President Novelli Francis Jr., you're recognized for your three minutes.

4:22:59 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Obviously, I think that this particular measure seems to be pretty much straightforward, Bill 35.0283, which seems to be the cleanup bill, and rather than having multiple amendments, all of those were put into this particular bill to clarify some of the inconsistencies that have been um resulted from the bill before there's no perfect bill so obviously there will be some amendments and i'm hearing today uh that there will be some additional amendments that needs to be offered i wanted to take this opportunity to really ask um attorney walker um you have been at this for quite some time now and do you believe you you know, getting these amendments put in place and addressing getting the OCR up and running, what else do you think needs to happen so that we could really see this industry up and running and be able to start to see the revenues coming into the territory?

4:23:58 I think what would need to happen next is there needs to be some coordination amongst the executive agencies. So this bill was designed, as far as implementation, it was designed to mirror what happened in Colorado where there was a cannabis star appointed who reported to the governor and who coordinated the implementation of the Cannabis Act throughout the government so I think that is the necessary next step and that would support OCR's ability to now issue licenses. So you went really where I wanted you to go because I wanted to ask you whether or not do you see the need for us to pursue a kind of bizarre to help us to be able to navigate and address some of these issues I know we have the OCR we certainly have the consultant in the form of positive Tia Nelson but do we still need because this continue to be a competitive market when you look at the other industry that might be available within the Caribbean and beyond do you see the need for us to seek an experienced czar within the field that could help us to be able to navigate and move this a lot more expeditiously?

4:25:13 It's my understanding that we're not using the term cannabis czar, but we're using the term special advisor. So it's my understanding that Positive Nelson is indeed that person. And I think what you need is someone who's knowledgeable of government operations because Because of course consultants are available to that person and OCR to further the implementation. So you see a need for the special assistant, which would be positive, Nelson, to be a lot more engaged in this whole conversation and to be able to assist us in being able to expedite this?

4:25:46 Well, he's not here today, but I do believe he's engaged and I believe that he has such passion for this effort that I have no doubt that he would be able to coordinate the effort that's needed to bring this to fruition. Do you agree with me there is a lot of work to be done on this? It is definitely a lot of work to be done. Do you agree with me that there's a lot more work that one person should be responsible for? I don't want this whole industry to hang in the head of I'll conclude right here. I don't want this whole industry to hang in the head of just um my colleague my former colleague positive tia nelson uh do you see the need again for us to to um try to ramp up at least for a time certain you know so that we can really get this thing moving we've been talking about this for far too long and we need to see some revenues um starting to come in i think additional staff and um contractors in the form of consultants should be identified as needed but i do think it's a good idea to have one person coordinate the implementation.

4:26:50 Very well. Again, thank you for the responses. My time has been called, but I truly look forward to the day when we can start to see this put in place to include the enforcement as well as the other regulatory requirements that need to make this happen. Thank you very much. Mr. Chair for the time. Thank you, Senate President Francis. Senator Alma Francis Heidegger, You're recognized for your three minutes. All right, in the meantime, Senator Bulkus, you're-okay, I think she's online.

- 4:27:37 You're recognized for your three minutes. microphone. Can you guys hear me well? Yes, good to go. Okay, excellent. Good afternoon. Once again, my questions are more along the lines of quite a bit. I saw some inclusive updates of definitions and etc. Do you think that we have covered all the necessary basis based on this piece of legislation? Or do you think if we go along, we would have to continue making amends in regards to adding more definitions because I know when we come out the door, I want for us to be able to have everything on par so everyone would be able to fully understand what's happening with OCR and this still agree.
- 4:28:34 Thank you for the question, Senator. I anticipate that in the future, there may be a need for future amendments because of course this is a trial and error uh what what this bill does is it cleans up those areas that we know now today that needs cleaning up but as ocr um implements the regulatory process and we coordinate the process through the agencies there might be issues that come up in the future which would require further amendment okay um i know my colleague was referencing um azar which he basically said um is the position actually belongs to our former colleague positive nelson and do you think that as well he seems to believe that it's necessary or potentially going down that pathway um do you think in the future that we might have to have a position such as this additional or outside of what um positive nelson is doing do you think with the staffing and support that he has this position would should or be enough in order to get the job executed from your perspective or how you see things moving along i think the the the one person is sufficient with support as needed and usually that support i think in this area would come through the form of consultants but this position is temporary this position is responsible for implementation so it's not a permanent cannabis our position like the ocr position is um i know with this piece of legislation i mean most of us knew that it was coming because when we all worked on this legislation in december of 2022 to get it through the ending of the 34th legislature because it was a hot topic um while we prepared the legislation we were fully aware we would have to come back and as a body we decided listen let's get it out there and then circle back around and then update it accordingly do you think from what is in this piece of legislation we've done an adequate enough job that could at least stabilize what our overall intentions are when it comes to this piece of legislation and ocr and what we want to put out to the public definitely because as a result of your work and the work of other senators in the 34th legislature we were able to formulate the rules and regulations and ocr has been able to
- 4:31:11 work so i think that this bill um is basically cream on the top and makes the effort easier but i do believe the act is sufficient and this bill just makes it even better Okay. Excellent. When I was looking through the bill, I can't find a section. There was some changes in regards to individuals and selenines. I'm trying to see if I could recall what section that was, and I wanted to ask, but I don't know if I have to circle back around once I find it. I wanted to ask what was the difference from the previous one in this new implementation of making some adjustments in regards to individuals with felonies, but I'll see if I could find that and maybe do a point of information once I can locate it within the bill, but I think I heard my time is in call. Yes? I may respond if that's okay, Chairman. It's found in a definition of disqualifying felony offense and it doesn't change the meaning or the intent of what happened in the 34th legislature just makes the language clearer the language in the act was a little wordy so we just cleaned it up so that there'd be no ambiguity okay and and that was something i wanted to make sure that we didn't stray too far away from the original intent as opposed to what we're doing so you're saying it's more along the lines of clean up and so it's not ambiguous so it has a more firm definition definitely okay thank you so much mr chair for the time senator bulkus you're recognized for your three minutes thank you mr chair uh my question is concerning uh
- 4:33:09 section 1b 1a surrounding the ex officio commissioner designees if I said that right and I'm wondering could the inclusion of these designees to the commissioners affect the consistency or speed of decision making or how will these designees specifically be selected What sort of qualifications will be required of them? You know, why is there a challenge for the commissioners to execute their responsibilities? Why the need for a designee?
- 4:33:56 Good afternoon, Senator Bulkus. Thank you for the question. And just for clarification, that's not in the proposed amendments, that was something that the OCR added in the event that we had commissioners who found their schedules didn't permit the time commitment. But that's not in the proposed amendments to have a designee. commissioners as it proposed it's for the commissioners only to sit on the board ex officio okay so that's not an amendment that you're trying to pass at any future given point in time no sir okay very well very well um I don't have any other issue, but I would like to ask, there was a mention on cannabis sales are expected to generate a lot of much-needed taxes for the territory. And I was wondering what sort of projections has the OCR calculated once the industry is up for the first few years of operations, what sort of projections are you looking forward to seeing?
- 4:35:21 Because likely since the industry has not been up, we have been losing out on those projections. So I'm just trying to wrap my head around what those numbers are. Senator Bulkus, thank you. And through the chair, if it's possible for us to get some projections back to you, I I think it will be important to sort of really get an understanding of real interest.

Again, we don't really know once we open applications up how many applications we're going to get.

4:35:58 We have an idea of how many licenses we will issue. We're not going to be issuing the full retinue of licenses in the first go-round, but I certainly think that having a little bit more solid data rather than continuing to guess would be helpful. We just approved fee schedules so we can certainly look at projected revenue for licensing fees and things of that nature, but in terms of tax revenue projection, respectfully, if it's okay, can we get back to you when we have a little bit more better data?

4:36:38 Okay, very well. Thank you for the time, Mr. Bex. Thank you, Senator Bulkus. I will just ask some questions until I see the next individual show up on the floor. As far as the bill, page 8 of the bill speaks to OCR establishing a secure phone or web-based verification system. This system will be a system that's already implemented in other jurisdictions or is this going to be something fairly new as far as how we're going to go about getting the verification system for law enforcement personnel and cannabis businesses to enter a registry identification number? The list goes on. So, Senator, thank you.

4:37:35 If I may, unless you wanted Attorney Walker to tackle that, but I'm happy to answer that question. So, in actuality, it already exists. We already have it. It's not a phone. It is a secured online portal that law enforcement can use for verification as well as when we have dispensaries and business establishments that need to be able to validate identification cards that they can do so it's already up so it's really just a matter of training those persons how to use it and it will be available again online so it's 24 hours and my next question way before at 8680 the federal government relaxing the restrictions changing the laws we had individuals who have been advocating for cannabis for many years so as far as the sacramental users as far as the conversations has that has been had ever since the rules and regulations in place I know this about to be in place what what do you have in mind as far as conversations with these individuals who who really look forward for this act to be fully enforced so they can practice the spiritual you know.

4:38:55 Ms. Mr. Chair, I can tell you that the conversations that I have personally had with individuals who would qualify as sacramental users, they are interested and eager. I think it has just been a communication gap, if I can just be completely frank. But I wanted to elaborate. What about the communication gap? Just in terms of them having all the information and understanding exactly how easy it is and that it's available right now. So we've been working and will work harder to reach out to certain organizations and tell them how to go about registering their organization and by their membership list so that they can register.

4:39:41 definitely interest and we're working on that um that group so that they can get registered and continue yes because those are the original lobbyists of cannabis uh senator donifer gregory you're recognized for your three minutes sponsor of the measure thank you mr chair so i neglected to share that we do have an amendment with regards to the uh note that attorney walker reference regarding the uh square the the uh feet away from their respective locations in both saint roy and saint john so we are striking 500 and inserting 250 to ensure that um we are um aligning the measure and i think there was another one where uh the recommendation was to insert designated caregiver before adults so we are prepared with those two amendments now um there was a request or a recommendation so that one the one that i just referenced came from uh miss moorhead so we are going to make that amendment today we're prepared to make those two amendments however i have to go back to the concern that uh senator of large made with regards to the designee um i'm not certain i sort of walked off the floor for a second but um with regards to the designee uh the reason why we chose those specific individuals commissioners because they've already been vetted by the legislature so it would be very difficult for us to allow the commissioners to determine who a designee is because it's not specific to um you know individuals who have already been vetted by the institution by the legislature so that one i am not inclined to amend unless we could get you know a clear path forward as to how that amendment can be made to you know allow for integrity in the measure um one minute and um the anticipation the other one is the the requests around the january 1 2027 uh when we when we wrote the measure we anticipated

4:42:25 that this particular piece of legislation would have been stood up by now and um that's why we gave the uh the operation of the dispensary until dispensaries up to the addition up to 2025 but the um the work has begun so that was just an anticipation so we don't really need to make any changes it will flow as the um the the cannabis organization is set up in the appropriate way um i think those are the two the three or four that i wanted to touch on but for the most part like i said earlier this is a cleanup measure i think one of my colleagues asked if we're going to see cleanup down the road and i'm can i come conclude mr chair sure i am certain that we will see cleanup with the on down the road because as this legislation is implemented we will see the areas that uh are required for us to make the necessary amendments as we go so just asking my my colleagues to support the measure, and I do have one amendment to bring today. And if there's any other amendments that we see as we deliberate on this measure, we can discuss them and make the necessary changes.

- 4:43:57 Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator Donoffer-Gregory. Colleagues, we have exhausted the first round. This is a straightforward bill, one of the testifiers do have to make it on a flight the hearing was originally scheduled to finish at 2 30 and i'm one person who do not like to rush but we understand that you're very important to this conversation so point of information okay go ahead point of information thank you mr chair sorry to uh interrupt you uh while i am inclined to vote in favor of this bill there is one burning question that i wanted to ask before we move forward sure um act 8680 mandates thorough background checks for all applicants seeking licenses uh to cultivate to cultivate to sell and to distribute cannabis can the ocr confirm that it has developed a legally compliant system for conducting these background checks and how will you ensure that the applicants who in the past were convicted for cannabis are considered equitable as per the law. Good afternoon again Senator Bulkus. Thank you for the question. I'll start with the second half first. There is in the application and scoring process, we are developing a specific rubric, and there is, as you mentioned, there is mandated a social equity portion of that.
- 4:45:44 And so we are working that into the scoring to ensure that those who may have faced some convictions in the past or issues of that nature will be equitably considered. And in terms of the background check requirements, we know that we don't have an enforcement division as yet, but I have had some conversation with a security consulting firm who has conducted that kind of work in other jurisdictions, and so we will be continuing conversations with them to see if we could have them on contract to ensure the proper vetting and checking of for the veracity of the backgrounds for applicants. Point of information.
- 4:46:39 Point of information by Senator Donoffer Gregory. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I want to thank my colleague for asking that question. um i suspect that the checks would be through ncic right correct are we utilizing what is the relationship that you're establishing with the virginance department of justice or the uh police department um once that is done and the because we need to make sure that folks records are um expunged and the information is moved off of their their files as well and there's a process here we have the justice initiative that we should be having discussions which is a non-profit organization here that is here to support um individuals who have those types of challenges once the um expungement takes place so that conversation needs to begin now so we do i'm trying to figure out why we would need a contractor i'm not certain what i'm missing in between there but why would we need a contractor for that particular purpose We have NCIC, which is it. We have the nonprofit justice initiative here. And if the expungement isn't done, we know who's moved off of the rules so we can make those decisions. Why do we need to hire a contractor for that particular purpose?
- 4:48:05 Good afternoon, Senator Fred Gregory. I am not in disagreement with you on those, but I was speaking also to, I believe there are other financial background documents and other requirements in the application process that specifically I was speaking to, not just the NCIC background, et cetera. And the expungement is a separate, I mean, all of those things are going on and those conversations are happening but in addition to that there are also other background check requirements um that we would be utilizing the security consulting for satisfy your inquiry okay so ie ie financials and what else I have the exact wording in here.
- 4:49:07 Can you repeat that? What else? So, i.e., financials and what other areas would you be conducting background checks on? The criminal records, the financials, and what else? So, that's basically it. Correct.
- 4:49:32 if i may add to that senator the rules and regulations um also would inquire as to whether there are any pending lawsuits it will inquire um as to whether you've ever had a license revoked in another jurisdiction um so i think those are all included in the detailed background check for some the licenses as well okay okay so that makes sense thank you mr chair do i hear a motion motion you may proceed so amendment is actually what i'm trying to do uh mr chair i move amendment number 35 that's 990 to bill number 35.0283 bill number 35.0283 is amended as follows on page 4 line 10 by inserting after 250 the following by striking 500 where it appears and inserting 250 and b on page 6 line 25 by inserting designated cared giver before adult iso move AMENDMENT NUMBER 35-990 HAS BEEN PROPERLY MOVED BY SENATOR DONOFETTE GREGORY AND SECONDED BY SENATOR DIANE CAPEWART HEARING NO OBJECTIONS SO AUDITED DO I HEAR A MOTION MOTION YOU RECOGNIZE for your motion sorry i move uh bill number 35 0283 as amended and at amending title 19 virgin
- 4:51:27 islands code part 3 chapter 34 the virgin islands cannabis use act to be uh favorably approved by this committee and forwarded to the rules committee for further consideration and action iso move Thank you, Senator Donoffer-Gregory. Bill number 35-0283, an act amending title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, has been properly moved by Senator Donoffer-Gregory and seconded by Senator Diane K. Part. I keep messing up. Senator Diane K. Part. Roll call. as amended as amended roca senator marvin a blyton yeah senator blyton yay senator anghel bockes jr yeah senator bockes jr yay senator diane cape Yes. Senator Capehart, yes. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff, yes. Senator DeGraff, yes.

- 4:52:41      Senator Alma Francis Heiliger? Yes. Senator Francis Heiliger, yes. Senator Donna A. Fred Gregory? Senator Donna Fred Gregory? Yes. Senator Fred Gregory, yes. Senator Javon E. James Sr. Yes. Senator James Sr. Yay. Mr. Chair, seven yays. Colleagues Bill number 35-0283, an act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part 3, Chapter 34, has been favorably approved and voted on in the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture and will be sent to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration as amended. colleagues I want to say it has been a productive day I do I hear anybody have any burning comments no personal privilege awesome stuff so thank you testifiers I would like to give an opportunity to place some closing remarks on the record starting with the director for OCR thank you mr. chair and and fellow members of the committee.
- 4:54:02      Just once again, want to thank you for allowing OCR the opportunity to come before you today to testify on this bill in particular. It certainly helps to clarify some points in the act as we work diligently to implement Act 8680. And so I thank you and look forward to being back next time. Attorney Kewalka. Similarly, I want to thank not only the current senators, but the members of the 34th legislature, because I recall you all working tirelessly over the holiday season at all hours of the day and the night to pass act number 8680. Thank you to the bill sponsors for cleaning up the inconsistencies that were in the act, and I think that this bill will further the implementation process.
- 4:54:53      Thank you for having me here today. Thank you testifiers for being here, thank you colleagues, thank you central staff, thank you to the listening and viewing audiences for being with us throughout the entire day. To everyone in the US, Virgin Islands, be safe out there, and to the youth then put down the gun, and hopefully the lights stay on. community on economic development and agriculture is here by adjourn

## 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.

- 9x      **Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger**  
heard in this transcript as: Alma Frances Heiliger, Alma Francis Heiliger, Alma Francis-Heiliger, Alma-Francis Heiliger, Frances Heiliger, Francis Heiliger
- 8x      **Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr**  
heard in this transcript as: Bulkus
- 8x      **Senator Diane T. Capeheart**  
heard in this transcript as: Capehart, Diane Capehart, Diane T. Capehart
- 8x      **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**  
heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, Duane M. DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff
- 8x      **Senator Marise C. James**  
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr  
heard in this transcript as: James, James Sr
- 8x      **Senator Marvin Blyden**  
heard in this transcript as: Blyde, Blyden, Blyton, Bryden, Marvin Blyton
- 7x      **Senator Javan James**  
heard in this transcript as: Javon E. James Sr, Javon James Sr
- 5x      **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**  
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bocas, Angel Bocas Jr, Angel Bocas Jr., Bocas Jr.
- 5x      **Senator Fred Gregory**  
the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
- 5x      **Senator Novelle Francis**  
heard in this transcript as: Francis
- 4x      **Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory**  
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Fred Gregory, Donna Fred Gregory
- 4x      **Senator Donna Frett-Gregory**  
heard in this transcript as: Dona Frey-Gregory, Donna A. Frett-Gregory, Donna Freight-Gregory
- 3x      **Senator Angel L. Borges Jr**

heard in this transcript as: Angel Borges, Angel Borges Jr.

3x **Senator Diane T. K. Park**  
heard in this transcript as: Diane K. Part

2x **Governor Albert Bryan Jr**  
heard in this transcript as: Bryan

2x **Senator Alma Francis Heidegger**

2x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**  
heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Boquez

2x **Senator Donald Fred Gregory**  
the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory  
heard in this transcript as: Donaford Gregory

2x **Senator Donoffer Gregory**  
the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory

2x **Commissioner Mario Brooks**  
heard in this transcript as: Brooks

2x **Senator Marvin A. Blighton**  
heard in this transcript as: Blighton

### 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.

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bill 35-0283</b> | Act 8925 · October 16, 2024 · An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act =o                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Act 8680</b>     | Act 8680 · December 30, 2022 · An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code by adding chapter 34A to expand the legalization of Cannabis from medicinal use to include Adult Use Cannabis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Act 8167</b>     | Act 8167 · An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code to add a chapter 34 establishing ·The Virgin Islands Medicinal Cannabis Patient Care Act· as it relates to the medicinal use and regulation of cannabis, the regulation of Medicinal Cannabis Provisioning Centers, and other related purposes anaQee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Act 8679</b>     | Act 8679 · December 29, 2022 · An Act amending title 5, chapter 314 of the Virgin Islands Code, to expunge the criminal records of persons convicted for marijuana- related crimes and offenses; establishing an Auto- expungement Task Force; making a \$250,000 appropriation from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund to the Office of the Governor for Auto-Expungement Task Force to fund the auto-expungement of records, social equity job training program, entrepreneurship training program, and business incubation and micro-lending program; and for other related purposes ---0 |
| <b>Act 8925</b>     | Act 8925 · October 16, 2024 · An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 34, the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act =o                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 35-0203