



| The Committee on Homeland Security, Justice & Public Safety

Legislature USVI

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0:00:00 in this territory that folks that doesn't have a driver's license sometime they're gonna take that chance and drive because that's the only way they're gonna get from point a to point b and when they do that it brings risk for all of us so it might as well we put them in a position where our risks are lower. Accident will happen with the best of driver. Also, we need to make sure that people are informed that you're not just handing a license out. They have to take a rating test. They have to take a driving test.

0:00:38 It's not just a walk in the park, and we need to understand that. But there's something I need to go to. And before I go to my line, a question. Ms. Matthews from Banking and Insurance read something here, And it was on page three of your testimony. The compulsory automobile liability insurance law provides that all owners of motor vehicle register in this territory who operate or cause to be operated a motor vehicle upon any public road or highway in this territory must maintain motor vehicle liability insurance. I pretty much read that for public safety more than anybody else. And while I read that for public safety, the Public Safety Commission have a representative here, and I'm going to stray away a little bit from what our topic is here today. Because there's a bunch of four-wheel bikes on the road every day. They say you uncover them. So I want to ask public safety, what are they planning to try to eliminate these motor vehicles, these four-wheel bikes and the road that's going to cause the same accident that is not going to be covered, that will leave people with their car not covered.

0:02:00 This bill protects a ton load of people. Can I hear from Mr. I forget the name, that's representing the commissioner? Thank you for the question, Senator. We have seen an increase in the activity that you speak about. And in short order, as I'm not sure if you're aware, we have increased traffic enforcement throughout the territory over the past several weeks, and that is ongoing. And enforcement with respect to that same type of activity is included in that same initiative. So we have stepped up enforcement initiatives to that end, to answer your question.

- 0:02:42 I wish and I'm pleased that you do Because I've been told from different officers That by law we can't chase them But when you see them park up someplace in Frederick They ain't fly the bike in there They drive the bike there So I beg you and I plead into you That you enforce these vehicles on the road Mr Lorenzo Thank you very much Mr Lorenzo You're a business owner You've been doing business from 1997 I think you said Yes How difficult it is for you when you have some of your employees that are in this same position but can't get a license? How difficult it is for you with your business? It's very difficult.
- 0:03:24 It is. Well, I will say that I will take a note on this bill. And with respect to Senator Carrion, this bill I call, I call this bill, the common sense bill, because with this bill, everybody wins. And everybody wins will the government, the local authority, of course the people that have been affected for so many years. i should say that that um believe it or not there's there's people around us or manos i'm sorry for time then in 20 years i mean you may proceed okay so uh and uh uh like i said um there's a ad around that say when you play the video the vi lottery everybody win yeah so this bill everybody win. That's very good. Mr. Chair I have one more question if I may to the representative, the Assistant Commissioner for DMV. May I proceed? You may. I need to ask this question because everybody believes that this bill only supports undocumented persons but right here in this territory there are local people, bond Virgin Islanders, that might not have all the credentials.
- 0:04:53 people have lost the birth certificate lost different things how would DMV support people just regular people citizens in obtaining this same particular license to be able to have a license and get the insurance assistant commissioner thank you for the question um we we highly encourage them to of course pursue obtaining these documents so that they could of course obtain their driver's license but would they be able to fall into this category and get a driver's license just as well yes sir thank you very much thank you very much mr chair and at the appropriate time i definitely will be supporting this measure thank you uh senator johnson uh senator bolquez you recognize for your five minutes you want to start in spanish or in english i'm going to do a little bit of everything you may proceed thank you mr chair and good afternoon colleagues good afternoon to the testifiers when i started this uh mr chair i have no quarrels or inquiries here however i would like to state that we are the stewards of the quality of life in this territory and in fact you know we have a large undocumented population that continues to grow here in this territory and we have heard testimony from even former and current leaders sharing that their parents or grandparents were in fact at some point an immigrant even so are undocumented one at fact when they were a child this measure changes the lives of those people trying to become citizens of this united states territory there is a undocumented population of skilled smiths and craftsmen masonry workers and experts landscaping religious leaders temporary teachers who come from throughout the caribbean chain to
- 0:06:54 contribute to our society every single day since 2010 19 states plus puerto rico and washington dc have allowed undocumented immigrants the opportunity to receive what is classified as a restricted driver's license and similar ids or privilege cards hence eliminating the chance of arrest from driving without a license a common fast track to deportation now more states are also considering this and research shows that the adoption of such a type of a law reduces the likelihood of hit and run accidents lowered insurance costs for drivers increases the number of insured motorists on the road uh it also increased increases revenue and public safety and improves poverty rates for those people as they're more suited to contribute and commute in our society colleagues let us all support the changing of the quality of life for the transitioning citizenry the mothers and daughters the fathers and sons of our island brothers and sisters who come here seeking opportunity and a chance to be a part of what is considered to be the american dream one would say it is important that we also understand that the bill yes there are some amendments and i believe we will continue my colleagues and i will continue to sharpen up the bill to get it to the point where we can assure that all corners are cut directly and there's no issues that's i tease crossed right mr chair i have no questions i commend the bill sponsor i also commend the amendment moving forward and i look forward to voting in the affirmative at the due time thank you thank you uh senator at large bulkhead uh now we'll move to
- 0:08:51 to the Vice-Chair, Senator Fonseca, then to Senator De Graff. Yes, yes, pleasant good afternoon to all the listening audience and the distinguished testifiers before us here today. This bill is good for the Virgin Islands, you know, unlicensed drivers will now be covered um the bill would save lives it generates revenue for the government of the virgin islands uh these persons will be able to you know pay for the driver's license you know the banks uh ms matches testified they are in favor of it uh the vipd the hair before us mr thomas representing Commissioner Ray Martinez. He is for it. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles is for it.
- 0:10:22 The Department of Justice, we have the Honorable Ms. Carol Thomas Jacobs, Attorney General, hopefully soon to be a judge. The governor has nominated her to be a judge. She is in favor of it. Of course, I'm in favor of her also. You know, it reduces uncompensated care in the hospitals. And I am the chairman of the Committee on Hospitals, Health and Human Services. And this is one of the things that I've been, you know, been preaching. That uncompensated care of the

hospital costs the Virgin Islands money. these persons will know be able to drive a vehicle that has insurance this will eventually save lives you know this bill is good for the Virgin Islands you know like my distinguished colleague from St. John has testified 19 states and has adopted similar legislation you know we have addition of you know distinguish people in our panel you know we have mr. Paul Alexander here a good friend of mine respectable guy we have Mr. Cristobal Teofilo Sifran also known as gringo good friend of mine they here today you know I got one question on the bill and and it's um on page five um and this is um regarding the testimony miss machus um okay um with this bill um the the persons will now be able to cash their their paychecks at the bank

0:12:18 this will be accepted in the bank so that they can cash their paycheck miss machu can you can you hear Good afternoon, Glendina Matthew, Acting Director, Division of Banking, Insurance and Financial Regulation. Yes, persons will be able to cash checks utilizing these IDs. They would not be able to open accounts, but they would be able to cash checks. Thank you very much, and I'm so happy to see you again. And don't forget that April meeting that you have with the banking insurance. I definitely is looking forward to my invitation. It's always so nice to see you. I know you have a lot of work. But this is a bill that is good for the Virgin Islands. You know, sometimes we think that things are controversial. But this is not controversial. Look at who is supporting this bill. We have the police. like i said you know justice the bureau of motor vehicles this is not controversial this is something new it's a change um but we have people here from dominica haiti the philippines st vincent st lucia these are people that live in our community and they are supporting it and you know i want to congratulate the chairman the honorable majority leader senator giddens for bringing this here before the community you know that's one of the reasons why the people have elected us they have elected us to to take a stand on certain important issues that is a benefit to the community and i stand before you here uh mr chair can i finish up yes i stand before here you

0:14:09 to let you know that at the appropriate time i will be casting my vote to support this measure blessings. Thank you Mr. Vice Chair and in the leap out and say in the defense of the good acting Attorney General that her comments today were formal comments on behalf of the Department of Justice and not necessarily her personal beliefs, okay? You have already congratulated her on what she was nominated for we don't want to start no trouble before thank you thank you for your line of questioning good acting attorney general that I represent you well you certainly did thank you the good ranking member how does a van yes you're recognized soon to be a minority leader you recognize for your five minutes I thank you thank you mr. chair good afternoon colleagues good afternoon testifiers of you and listen and present you know I I personally would like to say on behalf of myself I I do not support the bill in the first section yc title 20 vernell's code part 2 chapter 35 section 372a is amended by striking legal before resident i ain't gonna strike legal before resident i highly respect every resident who came from abroad contributed to this territory thank you who testified here today in in in for this bill i support you i i leave but like you say you all are residents you all went through the process now if the bill was going to say to me that persons who are putting the documentation into the immigration and are waiting for it and we want to fast track and then we look to make some adjustment for that because they're here already i will support that i will not support removing legal in the virgin islands to take it away i i i live here my life this is where people

0:16:39 should come to better themselves in their life come from wherever come from around the world come from timbuktu i open my arms i welcome you here come through the legal process all of the legal persons who testified here today testified because the legal residents of the territory this is my stance I will not change it but I'm open to having conversation because I represent everyone in this territory legal or illegal hey if we have to to send you back we have to send you back but again apply the right way everyone here did no vipd uh do you have uh let me get your title please tom mr thomas sergeant ludrick thomas special assistant to the police special assistant thomas uh do you have statistics that show how many illegal residents have committed accidents getting accidents and and and ran um i don't have the i don't have the data with me however um we can perhaps go through the chair we could provide that information also so we could find a way to address it um do you have information of how many of them are uninsured no we could find a dollar exactly again you know i would like to could you do you have any information to show um or anyone how much revenue we can generate by passing this bill well i won't be able to tell you how many how much revenues you will be able to generate but um right that would be for another entity to determine right and and that's what i say i i think those are fair questions across the board to find out you know um you know um so two minutes there are a lot of cases we all agree but there are cases of persons who are legally here who have driver's license who get in accidents hit and run and leave they leave too so I'm saying to do the breakdown this way

0:18:43 in form of a bill and and I think a lot of people you know want to be in what we call politically correct but I think at some point you know and before my time ends when we I don't have a problem going against the federal government eventually we got about constitutional we gonna do that but I'm saying we went against the federal government to identify what residents are for cannabis I back the hundred percent no for driver's license will become like a gateway to something else who say hey we could drop every drop all the stuff locally and decide hey we gonna go with this big

because this body can do it by the law so So let's not set a bad precedence, address the things we need to address properly.

0:19:36 Have the conversations and address it. Is it a serious situation? I'm sure it is. But let's see the statistics on it. Not because people get in an accident and leave, mainly we're legal. But any person who is illegal, who is trying to become a resident of the Virgin Islands, you go through the process, I welcome you 100%. And those of you who came that route, thank you for all you have contributed to this territory. We couldn't have done it without you. So thank you for what you have done. But again, I don't support the bill as it is.

0:20:12 Time. Ain't no way, as you just say, ain't no way under the sun I'm going to change my mind until we're willing to address some of the issues directly as an entity and we go from there. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you, ranking member from Savant, and that's why we're here, pros and cons. Senator Kiepert, no, Senator Frances Heidegger, you're recognized for your five minutes.

0:20:50 Good afternoon. Good afternoon to my colleagues, testifiers, people of the territory. First of all, I would like to put on the record, I am a product of parents that are immigrants. My mother came from Tortola, father from St. Kitts Nevis, and I remember as a child when she was pregnant with my youngest brother, she got in trouble because you had to travel in and out at a time, and apparently she was so pregnant she couldn't just go next door to Tortola. She got a stamp in that said she deliberately overstayed her welcome just to give birth to a U.S. child. I remember that vividly as a child. And this is the kind of stuff that was happening back then.

0:21:39 But we fast forward to today, and I am a very fair person. I am a very fair person. I am always going to come from a place of data, information, and pros and cons. I want to commend my minority member for bringing forward this piece of legislation. And we've spoke about quite a bit of the pros that could happen because of this. But I pay attention to a lot of different things when I do research. And one of the things that no single person I have heard brought to this table here today in these chambers is the size of our community. Nobody has spoken about that, and that is a major factor. And what some people are not paying attention to, we listed off 21 locations that have millions of people in it, millions. If you go to Rhode Island, 1.09 million people. New York, 8.4. Delaware, 1.3003 million people. And then I took the time to divide them by law enforcement, because this is also dealing with the enforcement aspect of it. So here in the Virgin Islands, for every one officer, you're roughly going to be dealing with 36 individuals in the state of Rhode Island for every one officer it's 240 individuals for every one in New York Delaware is 192 I toss out these numbers to share something we are a territory and as a small community what happens in 19 states with millions of people is not the same identical dynamic here in a very small community that's the size of a dot

0:23:40 and where my concern comes in because i want to share with you i support what we're attempting to do but i don't want to leave this senate floor without sharing with you the cons of it as well two minutes when you're in a small community we are now creating a potential database where it would be very easy to now identify undocumented people undocumented people if we're going to create a car that has a different just color you're going to be able to specifically identify them for who they are just by their driver's license and when you're in a situation when this community is so compact the probabilities of just being able to find tom joe harry is not difficult when it's a situation of you living in maybe new york the probabilities of you running into the same law enforcement is probably slim to none the probabilities of you coming across the same dynamic is not going to be the same as in a very tiny community that we have and that is something i'm concerned that we're not even attempting to discuss the size of our population The Virgin Islands is unique where we're divided into three islands.

0:24:58 St. John has 4,000 roughly. St. Croix is 50-50. To the police department, if you're in a situation where you have an undocumented individual that got into an accident, and you have a local individual that got into an accident, the local police show up. People are upset, angry They're going back and forth Somebody says You know, I know a friend in immigration Let me call them They show up Can you as the police stop The federal government From going with that person No, Santa You can't do it But we have now provided a document To now identify all of these Individuals in this territory That is so tiny I grew up here where I could almost identify every last one of my friends I went to school with in various neighborhoods. And this is just me, one person. So I'm not saying I don't understand what my colleague... Mr. Chair, could I wrap up, please?

0:26:05 You may. I'm not saying that I don't understand what my colleague is trying to do. But we have to understand that not everything that is done in the states is going to be in our best interest in a community this size. So I want to add that to your thought process. When we are, you know, we heard a lot of chair leading, but I don't want to walk away from here not telling you the other side of it. Because it's not going to be as simple as a lot of people might think it is in a community this size. so i wanted to put that on the record thank you mr chair thank you uh senator francis heiliger uh next up you ready sir senator javon james senior you recognize for your five minutes Sergeant Alarms, please come

forward.

0:27:14 Greetings to the people of the U.S. regional islands. Thank you, testifiers, for being here. I stand in support of the concept behind Bill No. 35-0013. But obviously, based on today's discussion, it is a fact that the legislation needs to be filed or amended. So I support the bill with reservations. And I hope by the time that we reach the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, that we can have some level of consensus between the various departments and agencies within government regarding Bill Number 35.0013. Because as we know, the United States Constitution grants individuals the right and freedom to travel.

0:27:59 But as the years went by, and we graduated or evolved from donkey and cat and has and cat, we realized that we now have vehicles. And we found a need to regulate how we go about traversing while living in the United States. My apologies. You may proceed now. Thank you. you owe me 20 seconds like Bob Marley said stolen from Africa, brought to America fight on arrival fighting for survival and that's what my grandmother did based on the story that my mom told me my grandmother came from the island of St. Kitts she went to St. Croix and because of my grandmother I'm here today because my grandmother left my mother behind and she was being taken care of And then eventually my grandmother went through the process, the legal process, and she was able to bring her siblings here.

0:29:05 And because of them, I am here today. And I appreciate what my grandmother did for us. However, I just want to make sure that while we make the recommendation of putting it in another color, like my colleague said that it do not create a situation of separation and there is some level of separation but it will lead to individuals knowing for sure okay that individual is undocumented and it will cause some fuss and fight when you go to the bank and you pull out your car that looks different you know people gonna fling the word and say x y and z so it will it will come with some issues however i do stand in support of the measure i am not a member of the committee on rules and judiciary but i will pay close attention to the conversation leading up to this legislation reaching to the full body because vipd said instead of 90 days they would like it to be one year and my question to vipd what is the rationale of vipd's recommendation of suggesting that the individuals show proof of reside in the territory for at least one year because that is in the testimony well well senator certainly um you should be able to provide um two minutes proof that you reside in the territory for a period of time and in order for you to be able to traverse our roadways i think a year is sufficient time to be to be able to be considered because i think the sponsor of the measure was going based off of the 90-day requirement for citizenship citizenship but those are individuals who are considered

0:31:00 like the good individual from savant said legal right so we are mirroring something that pertains to individuals and listen these are not my words based on the united states government that individuals are legal and we're saying these individuals will have temporary status as far as driving and we're saying 90 days so i i just need to know i guess the response of the measure will speak on that whether he plans to to put that language in the bill regarding the 365 days as showing proof of um residing in the territory because you want individuals to be law-abiding as well we want to make sure that you don't just come here within three months because you could play the game for three months and behave yourself and then eventually you can now go on the road and then be your real self but i think within a year you can really get to see who the behavior or the characteristics of that individual but not only that senator we also have to consider the fact that a year should give you sufficient time to not only know our roadways but learn the way we drive and to learn our driving process our laws in particular there are a lot of people that don't we obviously forget that we have to stop at the stop sign a rolling stop is not a stop we have people doing those type of things all the time and a year is sufficient time to be able to understand that and more as it relates to safety on the roadway and you're absolutely correct you're absolutely correct if i'm not mistaken we are the only caribbean island or any place in the caribbean that drives on the left hand side time if i'm not mistaken dmv are you aware of that we have other no i think we have others we have other islands uh that you drive on the left hand

0:32:49 side but we're the only u.s u.s u.s territory i don't i would not abuse my time like i said i stand in support of the bill but with reservations and i look forward to the the committee on rules and judiciary hearing where we can see those amendments thank you mr chair for the time and thank you everyone for testifying here today thank you uh uh senator james senior and i'm sure you'll see some amendments starting from today we don't really have to wait until then um uh senator joseph senator joseph you're recognized for your five minutes i thank you so much mr chairman i really appreciate and good day everyone i really appreciate the intention and the principle of what this a piece of legislation is attempting to do but i was listening to my colleagues as well as i wanted to share a personal a personal experience that i had my daughter had just gotten her driver's license this would have been in 2017 and she got into an accident someone who didn't have a driver's license or insurance hit into her now she just in high school first time behind a wheel and she got into an accident the police officer waited until i was on the scene because she was a minor so that she could have a discussion with them and represent herself and she represented herself well the other driver who was negligent

- 0:34:57 he wasn't able to produce his driver's license turned out we went to court guess who was present my daughter and i and a police officer guess who was absent the gentleman who hit into the car and his my car which had a big dent on it he had no insurance the police officer never asked for or even arrested him because he didn't have his driver's license no driver's license no insurance who had to carry the burden of fixing my car I did and so it is a issue here in the Virgin Islands VIPD that is an instance tell me what would normally and this is for the special assistant to the commissioner what would be the normal activity and normal course and process in an accident a vehicle accident where the person who is negligent what would happen to them especially if they don't have their driver's license. Well, if the individual did not...
- 0:36:13 Please state your name before we are transcribing. Sergeant Luther Thomas, Special Assistant to the Police Commissioner. If the individual did not have or possess a driver's license or even produce a driver's license at the time, the individual should have had some sort of identification on them, whether in the form of an ID or... He did have an identification. He showed his ID that he was working in Pueblo Supermarket. so at least we know where he was so we should have been able to have gotten his address to put in the report and then he could have been sued through small claims you could have redeemed your money you said he had a job he should have been able to he had fled the island you didn't say that you're saying i'm telling you now because that was part of it he had fled the island because went through the process he had fled the island and so my i i also is it maybe i should ask the attorney general candy the acting attorney general couldn't that officer have arrested that person on site because they did not have a driver's license two minutes senator you know you know i don't i don't you know this is what you're saying i don't I don't know all the facts and circumstances. I'm just giving you the scenario. I don't want to presuppose what would happen. Excuse me.
- 0:37:39 Senator, you ask a question. Please allow the testifier to respond and then. Very well. Because we know that the stenographer is going to be pulling the hair out. Please. I'll give you back your time, but please allow her to respond and then you go ahead. Thank you. Okay, so Senator, I hear what you're saying, but I don't know all the facts, I don't know all the circumstances, I don't know. And I don't want to tell you this is what should happen in that particular situation when I am not privy to all the information, to all the facts, to make an appropriate determination. Okay, so my point is that while this piece of legislation would help resolve some issues regarding persons who are undocumented, I know I feel it because my parents are also immigrants. I remember vividly that immigration sent my father and my mother home when I was an infant here. My father was overstaying and incidentally he got in an accident. And so that's how they found out he was overstaying.
- 0:38:54 And we all were sent back to the island nation of Antigua. I was maybe six months old. And my mother had the wherewithal to bring us back here to St. Thomas. But my father had to stay up there until he got himself straightened out. So it does meet a void. But we have to be cautious because we could also provide an opportunity for people to, again, take advantage of this very vulnerable population who has come here to better their life. If someone, and I was sharing, one of my colleagues was sharing with me, someone at the bank, Mr. LaFond, they would know that this person is, by the distinguished different card color, they would know that this person isn't staying here legally. And what could happen? Again, it goes towards the discrimination we were talking about. So I will defer it back to attorney if she, I know she wants to say something. To that extent, but the law speaks to it. If the chair permits, I would.
- 0:40:13 Okay, on the chair, go ahead. Okay, so I know this, I just want, and I think it addresses Senator Holliger's concern too. And I hear you, I understand your concern, But federal law under the Real ID Act and under the regulations that govern the Real ID Act, it specifically, and in fact in my testimony, that's why I actually quote it in my testimony because I suspect this may be an issue. It actually says that the license or identification must have a unique design or color indicator. that is what the federal statute requires and if you look if you look at all the if you look at the other jurisdictions that have similar legislation they all have similar language for those that i've looked at they have similar language it talks about a unique design or color identification but that doesn't prevent anyone from actually uh reporting that this person is an undocumented person who knows that and reporting them to the to the proper federal authorities does it the truth is you know you could be what people do it people could don't you're pushing it but go ahead I'm very thank you so much mr.
- 0:41:50 chair but I'll just wrap up I'll just ask the acting attorney general to just wrap up yeah what I'm saying is that I understand the concern but we have to follow the law and the law says that these limited purpose I didn't driver's license and identification must have a unique design or color indicator ask and answer thank you thank you so much and thank you so much mr chairman for the leniency i know you were busy working so i took advantage thank you prior to recognizing uh senator fred gregory point of information senator carrion thank you Thank you Mr. Chair. Currently in the application process for BMV they have a section if an individual is applying for a real ID or for a license and there is a distinguished sign that separates a real ID license from a not real ID license and there are some markings on it for identification purposes so it's it's something that they currently have within the system and it just needs to be expanded if needed to be

but it's required for the certification and compliance purposes of the federal government and that's why they had to you have that thank you senator carry on senator fred gregory you're recognized for your five minutes thank you mr chair and good afternoon to the testifiers so i have listened intently to the discussion before us today and as my colleagues talk there's just so much information that's

0:43:51 permeating out of this conversation in particular and i think senator joseph tried to flesh out my concern but my good millennial colleague from st croix brought up an issue about the different colors of the identification and within the legislation there is a section that speaks specifically to uh the director of the DMV or employees of the DMV not reporting any information um about an undocumented let's just use that for the sake of this discussion an undocumented person here in the territory however as I undocumented Donna takes her ID that has a different color or whatever that is, nothing prevents that person in the bank from seeing Donna coming every two weeks to change a check and decide that he or she is going to pick up the phone to say, hey, X, Y, Z, right? So I want to make sure that we are not moving in a direction where we have unintended consequences because many times we're trying to help and we hurt in the process.

0:45:22 And, of course, we compare ourselves as to my good colleague in the minority, the radio host. We often compare ourselves with other states, but let us be reminded that we are in a very small knit community just yesterday our IRB director talked about the fact that our tax system mirrors our tax system on the united states level for about three million people whereas we have 87 000 people we have to really flesh out what we're doing here in the virgin islands and be mindful of not comparing ourselves with other states because I see some unintended consequences here. But let me ask this question. When I looked at the measure initially, I said I thought that the measure was focusing around individuals who possess valid authorization for work, temporary protected services, individuals who approve for asylum applications or students who attend the university of the virgin islands as well as our teachers we know that we have many teachers here who are h1b visas etc um in talking to the sponsor it expands it a little more and hence my concern around the you know you you show your idea the the the super two minutes so these are my concerns i i see the um the importance of us making sure that we address the issues on our roadways uh and i'm going to ask this question of our representative

0:47:17 from vipd and my concern here is you know we've come before this institution with testimony but but we really need to begin to provide data. And many times we don't really think about the data that we need, but in order for us as elected leaders to make an informed decision around an important matter of this nature, I believe it is important for us to have some idea as to how many people are stopped without driver's license, without insurance, that kind of stuff. So you don't have that information at all, Mr. Thomas.

0:47:55 Senator Carrione did request some information that I have here. So you do have something? I'm not sure if it's the information that he wants in a manner in which he wants it. He'll have to look at it. Okay, my time is running, so we'll see what you have. And then in the legislation, it speaks to two IDs, and I need clarification on that. So is it one or the other? Let me ask DMV this question, because they would be the issuing entity for both of the IDs. in your in reading the measure is it one or the other meaning if you're not a driver can you you can get an ID but you can't get to can you get to is it clear enough in the legislation that you cannot get two pieces of IDs from this measure the legislation does not speak to getting to what we understand is either Either or.

0:48:48 Either or. Okay. And then under the, okay, so this is through the chair to the legal counsel, Mr. Chair. Can I proceed? You may. Okay. within the statute, the Virgin Islands statute, we have many different definitions of resident. Just recently, we had a huge discussion with when we moved the cannabis measure. do we need a definition in this particular um measure because we have lots of different definitions of residents within the statute in the in uh in the virgin islands so i i just need to be clear on you know do we need a different definition for resident here because i think that my colleague from savannah his concerns are valid as well but we need to make sure that we fleshing this thing out in the right way that we we tied up in a right in in the right bow because we don't need any unintended consequences I heard one of my colleagues over here speak to the fact that this is going to address uncompensated care foresting from the truth so let's let me hear from you go madam legal counsel through the chair to senator Fred Gregory being that the the proposed bill would take the award legal from the statute, essentially 35 VIC, 20 VIC 372A, then it kind of opened it up to anybody who lives here. I

0:50:56 i i i know that um at least i don't see right now and i take a moment to look that resident isn't defined within chapter title 20. so it would be prudent since the term legal is being removed to perhaps further define what would be considered a resident for this section for this section yeah so that's that's one of my concerns that i think that what we need sharing about mr chair can i ask one more question if you would give me some leeway you may you know this chair is always uh generous you may wrap it up so this question is for bmv and the question is so how would the bmv validate the um the identification of let's just say an undocumented person and when i say identification Proof of identity in the legislation speaks to certain unexpired consular identification document issued.

- 0:52:01 How would the DMV now be able to do the validation of these documents? Because we know the world that we live in, right? So how? Because I'm in support of the measure, but I want to make sure that we show this measure up. We don't need any unintended consequences on this. Thank you for the question. It's actually a great question. This is something that I would definitely consult with the director.
- 0:52:31 It's for open conversation, so in order for us to determine the validity of their residency, the identity, I should say. So it's a conversation that needs to be held. Yeah, so these are the things that we have to contemplate, colleagues, as we move this measure forward. and we just have to figure it out but those are my concerns mr chair thank you for um the leeway thank you uh senator fred gregory point of inquiry senator francis heiliger thank you um point of inquiry to the chair to vipd um like i said before i i support the concept and i clearly see we have quite a bit of amendments to try to clean this up but when it comes to I am very I'm a very protective type senator I'm always looking at things that could happen I'm looking at ways for protection now I know the VIPD had an issue a while back where internally data was collected and sold I believe outside of the department There was an incident. It was all in the news where there was, I think, an individual had collected some of the information and had put it out to the public.
- 0:53:57 I think they either sold it or did something with it. I read it in the news a couple years ago. I don't recall. I don't recall, Senator. okay well you might not recall but if a situation like that how do we have protections when it comes to information once you're documenting these individuals because that's what we're going to be doing well the department has policies with respect to the dissemination of in the of information by employees and staff okay i also in the bill i'm almost done in the bill it speaks to i think it was section f where you're not supposed to share information i guess voluntarily but does anything preclude you from if the federal government comes to whether the dmv or the vipd and says we need information what what precludes that from happening can you refuse the federal government from turning over this information to them if they request it i would say it depends on what they need information for. If it's an ongoing investigation, we would seek Attorney General an opinion with respect to the dissemination of that information. So it's not that we would just readily go and just... Well, the acting Attorney General is here, so could you respond? Okay. Well, Senator, the statute itself states that you cannot turn over the information to anyone without the informed consent of the applicant, a warrant signed by a state or federal judge, a lawful court order or a subpoena.
- 0:55:42 So if someone from the court system, I got you. Thank you very much Mr. Chair. Thank you Senator Francis Eiliger, Senator Fred Gregory you're recognized for your point of inquiry, and then followed by Senator James Sr. Thank you, so I really think this is a good discussion. So all day I've heard that the purpose of this legislation is to address driver's license, drivers, uninsured drivers, that kind of thing, white people are not but so what why and I'm not sure who I should be asking this question too but it's something that we need to ask ourselves colleagues why are we issuing a second license if we are talking if we are pushing the agenda because I agree with the agenda around the driver's license issue and the fact that we have a lot of motorists in our community who are uninsured who have driving cars that's not registered and who do not have driver's license. However, as I read it a little more, I didn't understand it before, I'm now seeing that there's another opportunity for a license as I asked earlier. So if we are, if the concern is only around driver's license and uninsured drivers, why are we, what is the purpose or the need for the second component in the measure. I need to understand that. I guess the chair can ask or the bill sponsor could say point of information but I need to understand. Thank you Mr. Chair for the time.
- 0:57:36 Thank You Senator Fred Gregory. Senator James Senior you recognize for your point of information or inquiry yes thank you mr chair for the point of inquiry and i i too do not know who i should ask this but they have several sections in there that speaks to accountability and we're using the word may instead of shall but the question i would like to ask the department of justice because i can't question my colleagues on the floor is if individuals are found in violation of disclosing such information what is the penalty for that is there a penalty or it just sits on deaf ears well this this statute does not provide a penalty so there are no consequences well not in this not not in the statute as well and that's the problem the bill and there's no knock to the sponsor but the bill needs some substance to it otherwise the word may you know the difference between the word may and shall you know so that's that's my question so i guess the sponsor the measure could determine if you abuse me or your shell and whatever may be thank Thank you.
- 0:59:01 Thank you, Senator James. And colleagues and ladies and gentlemen, that's exactly why we are here. If something is missing, then we amend it, we put it in. That's why I had to thank the Department of Justice earlier who evidently worked along with the sponsor. There were certain observations, they have put it in, something else might have been missed, there might have been typos, whatever it is, we are here to have a discussion and make sure that we try to provide the best document that we possibly can. And before I go to the bill's sponsor, I'll ask a couple of questions or make some statements, okay?

- 0:59:47 First off, I don't want us to get off track and believe somehow that this measure is just to somehow willy-nilly grant undocumented individuals a driver's license or an ID. This is also about those individuals who are legally here by way of a work visa or a student visa etc we have teachers in our system right now who are in limbo that can't uh operate a motor vehicle we heard testimony where they're packing up in in in cars carpooling getting to and from work etc because of our lack thereof public transportation etc and i'm going to tell you as a retired law enforcement officers i prefer to know where they are and how to find them And if they're going to come in and be able to get what I would rather hear called a, what is it, I had it written down here, a driver's authorization card or a driver's privilege card or an operator's privilege card, whatever the case may be, I would prefer for them to have that.
- 1:01:31 Many times as a certified traffic accident investigator I've handled accidents where the individual don't have nothing on them at all. And those are the individuals that you can't find later on. Can I finish my line first, please? I will recognize everyone. I think I've been generous to allow everybody to say what they have to say, We haven't even gone to the sponsor yet, and I beg your indulgence to those who are waiting for block three.
- 1:02:08 This document I walk around with for a long time. You see the thing turning color and all. I had this from a time I went in the police department. This is the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence. And in looking at doing some research and this measure up to about 2.30 this morning, I also looked at the pros and cons of it. And a lot of people in favor of this measure as well, also granting the driver's license to illegal immigrants, that is, often refer or cite the amendment of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which holds that states must provide equal protection to all people who live in their jurisdictions, not just citizens, but to all people who live in their jurisdiction.
- 1:03:10 And in looking at this, I know off the top, it's like going to the doctor's office and they're telling you, you have to take this big pill, and you're looking at it and saying, well, who gonna swallow that? But if you wanna get better, you would take it. And once you take it without water, you're gonna realize it went down nicely. But I say that to say that as we work this document, as long as I've been here, they're always saying there's no perfect document. And as we're here discussing this, I love the discussion back and forth, the pros and the cons. But I want everybody to just take a look at this fairly and at the end that we make our decisions professionally, respecting everyone's belief. But I really wanted to put on record that I don't think that we need to just look at this about just undocumented individuals, but also look at those individuals who may legally have a right here for work and school.
- 1:04:21 and fall in the limbo of not being able to obtain a driver's license or an ID. This current system just does not serve anyone well. And we're trying to find that level ground where we can address this problem. I quoted something earlier. earlier as to how much millions of people across america is here uh illegally but everybody every state is trying to address this somehow all right uh i will recognize senator francis heliga quickly for a point of inquiry and then we go to the bill sponsor thank you um point of inquiry to the chair to um representatives of the various organizations um listening to my colleagues here today um for myself i'm going to keep saying my biggest concern is protecting or identifying like undocumented individuals with a color-coded id in such a small community but would you guys consider some i heard several colleagues speak about putting in the bill specifically those that students teachers individuals that have already turned in their paperwork already going through the process is that something that you think is workable or do you believe that it should just stay open-ended potentially leaving the doorway open to identify people that have not don't even fall into any of these other categories what are your thoughts on that well for the chair what i would say is is uh people who as you mentioned teachers students and so forth well we know is not everybody who is after a driver's license some people have no need for driver license but as the bill states either or they can have an identification for everyone to go to the bank to cash a check so i see this bill is good for that purpose to help undocumented people who want to have some form of identification now when the immigration picks up an undocumented person they don't deport them
- 1:07:10 they give them a hearing and they have a right to an attorney and then the judge can tell them i give you one year to put everything together before you can leave this country it's not like they just pick up people and just send them send them back so when they're making reference to when you go to the bank and the cash or the teller will call immigration for them they can do that but the person does not have to stay there and wait until they call the immigration for immigration to come and arrest them they get their money they go into their business immigration get their name and address and come to your home ready and pick them up they still don't deport them they give them a hearing as i said and they can get six months to a year identified as a undocumented with immigration at that point so that again they would now be identified by immigration as undocumented right okay so um any other representative would like to chime in so i could get a better understanding uh one more and then i'll move to the uh thank you mr to the sponsor you may yeah um okay yeah as my colleagues didn't just mention it i think it is uh good as you mentioned the second id um let's say for instance someone that most of the places especially the banks when you go there to change a check to cash a check they ask you know of course for a second id let's say if that person have only his driver's license he has his passport he won't be able to

cash that check so i think the second i do mention it is it is good and not only you know when you go to the bank and also the places where you go they ask for a second identification thank you i'll take one more point of information and then we're going to the bill sponsor we need to move along a bit uh senator uh please recognize senator the grass mike

1:09:14 uh thank thank you mr chair i i just wanted to add in the the discussion that you brought forward i will support us looking to do legislation to address that that is something different to me to what we are discussing for me based on what i said based on why stand to address that issue so we could always have these working um meeting we take the document we sit down in a committee and we address it to address some of the issues have been done before we can find an equal medium and i i'm willing to support that but not this as it stands thank you for the time mr chair so he sits right next to you uh he sits in your caucus you guys can work on this and we can come to a happy medium on this thank you uh senator carrion you recognize i think we're working towards that end right now thank you thank you mr chair i want to say um to my colleagues thank you so much for the support that they've been providing so far and the feedback and concerns i think are legitimate ones and that's what we're here for like you who stated every proposal legislation is a working document it's a live document and this is one that is a live document and we're here this is the first phase of it there's some recommendations have been provided by testifiers from the government i just want for the record to be clear that we didn't work on this draft isolated apart from the government agencies at the forefront was the director of the Bureau of Motor Vehicle who clearly also suggested and recommended the items that should be used for proof of identity and so many others along with Department of Justice and the VAPD and so many other There are agencies and stakeholders that play a key role in this legislation, apart from meeting with different associations, like the Insurance Association, the Banking Association, and so many others, just to ensure that our T's are crossed and our I's are dotted. But there's always room for improvement. There's always room for change. And like i said, this is a live document. I wanted to address a few things with regards to the residency stipulated within this proposed legislation. And i want to ask the Assistant Director for the Bureau of Motor Vehicle. When someone comes in with a foreign license and is here in the territory, how long are they allowed to be able to operate and drive with that foreign license?

1:11:54 if they have a foreign license provided it provide us with a driving record and we normally vet them through this system called save it may be anywhere from one to two years and our license will reflect that amount of time on it as well okay and in conversations with the director who who's not here this afternoon also, i understand that BMV has that documentation or where they validate foreign documentations because there's international manual and data system where you can validate original official documents from different countries and places. But also when someone comes from the United States to the territory, they're allowed to drive for 90 days with their current driver's license without having to change and turn in their state license for a local license. So based on the 90 days residency requirement, it was suggested and recommended by the director that we use that portion of what we have already in the code and allow 90 days residency in order to then be able to obtain a driver's license. Because currently, if you have a driver's license from any other place, after 90 days, would have to turn it in and get a local driver's license so so that's that's one thing and with regards to recommendations from VIPD i appreciate recommendations but then who is to say that during that year these individuals won't be driving illegally and what we want to do is to minimize having people in our streets driving without the assurance that they know our traffic laws and without them being properly insured and licensed to do so.

1:13:48 I know there was questions that were arise today about data. And data, we can and we have data from VIPD. We have a number of documents here, papers that were submitted by VIPD that states the amount of tickets and violations for failure to register, failure to display license tickets, driving without a license, driving without being insured. The problem we have is that if you are a person that has an irregular status, which is a term i like to use because i believe everyone has some sort of documentation, they're not registered in our system. So it's hard for us to get data to tell you what's the amount of individuals that we have within the Virgin Islands that have an irregular status, or what's the amount of people in the Virgin Islands that are illegal residents. one of the terms that are used, it's almost impossible because these individuals live within the shadow because of their immigration status. By providing an ID and a driver's license we are allowing a sector within our community that are very active within our community, and we know that's the truth, to come out of the shadows and now we'll be able to then have data about these individuals and have data that when we could accumulate and be able to report back in the state of California when they implemented this measure a year after they were able to prove through data that individuals that the hit and run numbers had decreased because now they had data to prove that individuals that registered who before had in regular status Now they're able to report and say the numbers have decreased, this amount of people have registered, and there's accountability purpose. What's accountability we have now? Zero. None. There's nothing really to say what's the amount of this, how many individuals we have within our population that fall within this category.

- 1:15:58 Another issue that was presented. If I may, Mr. Chair. you you you may uh thank you regards to a second id currently bmv offers a second id not everyone is a driver has an interest in driving but can apply for an identification card so this was a suggestion presented also um by the director of motor vehicle and it's what and it is what currently we have within our system and i want to also clear something else that i think is very important this measure doesn't only apply to individuals that are here illegally or in legal resident this applies to resident legal residents of the virgin islands who maybe do not want to go through the hassle of submitting all the documentations that are necessary for real id and prefer to just submit basic documentations to have a driver's license within their territory and currently we have individuals that fall within that category. Seniors who don't want to go to the household and have to wait for a whole month or more to get a response that they've been approved for their real ID process and given a real ID license. So I wanted to make that clear also that again there's other individuals that are here legally that fall within this category. Students that have a foreign visa, a student visa in the territory. Individuals that have are here with working permits now struggle when they have to renew their and or extend their visa license or their visa permits i should say and they're not granted a license until they receive those documentations which could take months to a year and receiving individuals who are here with companion visas the family members the spouses for these individuals that are here with working visa they cannot get a driver's license at this moment because they don't have a social security number So, to say that this bill only benefits individuals with illegal status, illegal immigration status, is far from the truth. This really applies and is applicable to individuals that are here in the territory, also legally, and it also applies to individuals who just don't want to have, for whatever reason, might not want to have a real ID. So, I ask my colleagues to take all these matters into consideration. What's the purpose behind of this? The purpose behind of this is to have safer roads and safer communities. And by having individuals identify and license, we're opening the door to provide a safer place for all of us. So thank you very much, and I ask your support on this measure. Thank you.
- 1:18:44 Thank you, Senator Carillon. Senator Johnson, on St. Croix, you are recognized for your point of inquiry. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My point of inquiry goes to motor vehicle. It's in regards to people that have a visa, also have a driver's license, and are now waiting for the visa because they expired. But they can't get the driver's license because the visa expired, but are forced to pay a great penalty. what is the motor vehicle status on this? Why do these people have to pay when it's not their fault why the visa ain't come back in time and have these big bills of 300 and 400? And these are the people that we asked to come in to teach. What's the stance on motor vehicle with this?
- 1:19:35 Isn't there a waiver that can be done? Just to clarify what you're asking, you're saying that these individuals who have visa, the ones that expired, you're waiting... The driver's license. The visa expired. Go ahead. the driver's license expired they're waiting for the visa to be approved but they can't get to renew the driver's license because the visa expired and they're here we brought them into work they could renew they could renew the driver's license there's been some modification between the immigration system where we could verify their current status and it grants them an extension so So with that extension, they can renew their license. Mr. Chair, if I may, that's my inquiry, but Mr. Pineda, has that similar situation happened to folks right now as we speak?
- 1:20:26 Can you allow Mr. Pineda to explain it a little bit more, Mr. Chair? I'm sorry, repeat that? Mr. Pineda is going through this experience of family members of his in which we're just trying to clarify based with my point of inquiry and I would like for him to explain a little bit more the start of this because it's happening as we speak. Folks have to pay an additional \$360 because of how long the visa took but motor vehicle are not paying attention that it's not their fault.
- 1:21:04 He's recognized. In time, so I would like Mr. Pineda to have a few words on what he's experiencing on his family. Mr. Chair? Yes, he's recognized. So, what happened is, the BMV is following our visa. So, if we have a three-year contract, our license would be three years. So, whenever our visa our visa will expire our license will be expired too so some of some of the teachers we are waiting for our visa to be approved that means we don't have any license valid license during those times so some of the teachers will have to pay like 360 depending on how many days our business has expired. So that's what they are expressing to us.
- 1:22:10 So the point of information, Senator Carrion, and then I'll recognize Senator Fred Gregory for a point of inquiry. of inquiry thank you just to provide some light because we've been dealing with constituents that have this issue similar issue um and the the problem lies that when their visas expire then they have to wait on the agency that hired them who is their sponsor to submit the documentations for the extension of their visa and they're allowed an additional two-year extension now in the mean sometimes the ball is dropped by the sponsor company which could be the government the department education or any corporation who bring in who brings in someone uh with a working visa so during the time that as they wait for the renewal process the license that they currently have is subject to the visa that they were given so if the visa was for three years the bmv gives them a temporary three-year license that expires now during the period of the renewal documentation they are driving with an expired driver's license so hence the problem when they renew there's

a penalty within the code for i think it's every month that they go by without with an expired driver's license and by the time they renew they have to pay that penalty for the months they were without renewing their license and and and that's the issue because in their case it's not something voluntarily that they are not wanting to get a renew license but that they don't have the documentation in order to get a renewal license so that we've had that conversation with the bmv director um the department of education can provide a letter that's one of the options that she provides so that they can verify that these documents are in process and they could but waive the fees to these individuals that are in this situation.

- 1:24:24 Thank you. I think we're gonna be here all day with these points. Interesting. But I'll recognize you, Senator James. I'm sorry, no, Senator James, I'm sorry, hold on. Senator, I did say, followed by Senator Fred Gregory. Senator Fred Gregory, you're recognized. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I definitely appreciate the conversation around the individuals that have work visas, et cetera. The gentleman that spoke, I think he's a teacher.
- 1:25:04 He's probably a teacher. So I do agree with the bill's sponsor that that gap in between, we could close that gap. And closing that gap just requires communication between the Department of DMV and the Department of Education. And in our instances, that's where most of our, what is it, H-1B visa people are. So that's a communication issue.
- 1:25:35 So our teachers who are here from the Philippines, that we need them, Jamaica, we need them, then we need to make them feel comfortable enough to go in and make the application, go into the education office, get the letter, because they're on the payroll still. They're not sitting at home, they are teaching our children every day. So these are things that we need to, that's why I said, we gotta show this up. I think it's a very good conversation, and there's a group of people in our community who are impacted by this in a very interesting way, but our responsibility as elected leaders to show this up and i think that is a right conversation because i know that many of them walk around here in our community feeling very disheveled because of situations like that so we need to show it up thank you mr chair thank you uh senator fred gregory senator james senior yes thank you mr chair for the time i'm here on census.gov and i'm reading a section are unauthorized immigrants included in the resident population counts and i know during the census that individuals might might not come forward but now that we have that data readily available at bmv i'm not sure if bmv can answer that but do you think there will be an obligation moving forward now that we have the data from all these individuals who are undocumented to include them in the census so we can have a better understanding of our true population because you know that is that determines our federal dollars and how things are allotted and if you can't answer it department of justice if you just want to weigh in on the conversation i think that's a good question um the director of course will be in communication with of course
- 1:27:34 the census it is a valid point um these individuals would be included well i'm proposing it will be included in our census population to keep account of the um residents in the community and the power that justice any comments i i i i think i i should it be included should we get that information directly from dmv is that what you're asking because i'm like everyone in the everyone in the virgin islands should be included in the census once you live in the virgin islands you should be included but we know that doesn't happen we have a sector we're talking about undocumented individuals you're saying that based on what's happening right now with the practice of the census everyone is included how do they come about with those numbers well i'm not saying everyone is included because everyone doesn't report but everyone should be included that um the purpose of a census is to find out every single person who lives in that community some people of course as we talk about today live in the shadows they don't want to report anything they don't want to identify themselves especially if they're here illegally so i'm basically saying there will be an obligation moving forward for individuals who freely gave the information into our system and are saying hey i'm willing to do the right thing so i'm saying that we will have have a better idea of our true population in the Virgin Islands. So that's all I'm basically saying. So there should be an obligation for them to be included in the census through BNV.
- 1:29:09 But that's another conversation. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the time. Thank you, Senator Giovanni James Sr. We have exhausted all senators debate time at this time. The committee will take a three-minute recess, and I'll be right back to get a motion on this measure. Committee on Homeland Security Justice and Public Safety recess for three minutes.
- 1:29:56 We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 1:32:26 We'll be right back. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 16 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 1:40:26 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 18 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 1:49:26 Thank you. We'll be right back. [2 such phrases repeated 9 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

- 1:53:56 We'll be right back. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 14 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 2:00:56 We'll be right back. Let's go.
- 2:01:56 The Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety for Wednesday, March 15, 2023 is back on record uh so we have exhausted all the debate time for bill number 35 that's zero zero one three at this time i'll entertain any amendments amendment uh senator bulkes jr recognized for your amendment please recognize uh the mic of senator bulkes jr thank you mr chair mr chair i move that amendment number three five dash two zero one is amended to bill number three five dash zero zero one three is amended by adding an appropriately numbered section to read as follows section blank title 22 virgin islands code chapter nine is amended by adding section 230 c to read as follows section 230 c automobile insurance coverage for holders of limited purpose operators license any insurer providing a person with a motor vehicle insurance coverage shall not consider as part of any of its underwriting requirements the legal status of a person who has obtained an operator's license under 20 vic section 375a and shall not deny automobile insurance coverage based on the person's legal status in the virgin islands be favorably voted upon in this committee and reported out to the committee of rules and judiciary for further action and consideration i so move properly moved by senator bulk is jr seconded by senator francis heiliger and senator ray fonseca any objections here are no objections on the amendment so ordered any more uh amendments a motion motion senator bulkus jr you recognize for your motion
- 2:04:33 thank you mr chair mr chair i move that bill 35-0013 as amended an act amending title 20 virgin islands code part 2 chapter 35 relating to the issuance of operators licenses and and identification cards to allow applicants to obtain limited purpose identification cards and operator's licenses without providing certain federally required documentation be favorably voted upon in this committee and reported out to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further action and consideration. I so move.
- 2:05:12 Second. Properly moved by Senator Bolkis Jr. seconded by Senator Ray Fonseca. Roll call on bill number 35, that's 0013, as amended. And media, please keep the camera on St. Croix and our good colleague there so I could see his vote, if we don't hear him, please. Madam Clerk, roll call on bill number 35-0013 as amended.
- 2:05:54 Senator Angel L. Boquez Jr. Yes. Senator Boquez, yes. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. No. Senator DeGraff, no. Senator Ray Fonseca. Yes. Senator Fonseca, yes. Senator Alma-Francis Heiliger. Senator Francis, Alma-Francis Heiliger. Senator Francis Heiliger, not voting. Senator Javon E. James, Sr. Senator James, absent. Senator Franklin D. Johnson. Yes.
- 2:06:35 Senator Johnson, yes. Senator Kenneth L. Gittins? Yes. Senator Gittins, yes. Mr. Chair, you have four yes, one no, one absent, one not voting. Thank you. The measure has passed. Congratulations to the bill's sponsors. At this time, I will allow for the government testifiers.
- 2:07:17 I'm coming. The measure has passed and will be forwarded to the Rules and Judiciary Committee for further amendments and action. I will allow for the government, I mean for the testifiers to give a 30 second close out, 30 seconds, no more please, starting with the acting, Eiji. Good afternoon Chairman Giddens, again thank you for inviting me to testify on this important bill.
- 2:07:59 I know it's important to the community and of course we're here to assist in any way we can. Thank you for inviting the Department of Justice. Thank you. The Department of Justice. Virgin Islands Police Department. Mr. Chair, good afternoon and likewise the VIPD is thankful for the opportunity to give testimony regarding the measure. Thank you. BMV. Good afternoon. We would like to say thank you on behalf of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and on behalf of Director McIntosh for inviting us here. We will be sure to provide any updates as soon as possible. Thank you. Attorney Matthew, Division of Banking and Insurance.
- 2:08:46 Good afternoon. I too would like to thank you as well as the members of the committee for the opportunity to provide information on this important measure. Thank you. Mr. Alexander. Thank you and the rest of the colleagues for giving me the opportunity to be here on this historic moment to testify in favor of this bill. Thank you. Thank you. We're not fully there yet. We have a lot more work to be done.
- 2:09:18 Mr. Flurry. Well, thank you, Chairman. behalf of the haitian community and also thank you to senator and to give me the opportunity to come here and of course you know testify and i want to avail myself also if any document need to be translated whether in creole in french in italian and of course in spanish i'm here to help i know So Senator Bolquez is Spanish, but I avail myself. Thank you so much. Thank you.
- 2:09:52 Ms. Vélez is available. She had to leave. Mr. James. Yes, thank you very much. On behalf of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association. And of course, the people of the Virgin Islands. Thank you very much. It's a great opportunity to be here. Thank you. Mr. Rene. On behalf of the Filipino community, thank you to all the members of the legislature to

support this bill thank you uh senator francis you had a point of yes point of personal privilege senator francis yes i i want to make sure put on the record that as a supporter of this bill um my decision to not vote today had everything to do with my believe that it should have been held in this committee and we needed to put in all the amendments that we discussed here today. Several agencies made several recommendations as well as us as senators on the floor and this specific piece of legislation is going to have at least another eight amendments to it. I am not a member of the Rules Committee and I would have preferred that it was done here before it moved on to guarantee that these protections that I believe are necessary for the undocumented are actually in this document but I am a supporter of it if I'm gonna go ahead and get my personal amendments that I'm going to be creating and hopefully I will give them to one of my colleagues in rules to get them in and amend the document and hopefully once it's to the Senate floor the entire legislature would more than likely be supporting it

2:12:00 Thank you. Thank you, Senator Francis Heiliger, and your comments are duly noted. Senator James Sr. Thank you, and this is specifically to the testifiers and everyone who is looking forward to this bill becoming law. I, Jovan James, stand in support of this bill. I'm a son of two immigrants, and let's make it clear, however we have a responsibility as the first branch of government and I know my colleagues gonna make the changes in rules and judiciary but I'm not a member of the committee on rules and judiciary do I have faith in my colleagues yes well I hope I hope and pray that there is a work a group session where we can discuss the amendments and by the time it reads to rules and judiciary that all governments and agencies and departments who are impacted by this bill do come back to be involved in the discussion regarding the amendments otherwise we'd be setting a bad precedence and we'll be setting up the government not the government the governor of the Virgin Islands to pass a bill that might have errors in it because of fear of getting backlash from individuals in the community so I want to make sure that in the rules and judiciary we have the invited testifiers because from there it goes to the full body and into the governor's desk and I don't the governor is gonna veto this but we want to make that before it gets to the governor's desk all governments and departments and agencies who were impacted weigh in on the amendments thank you mr chair for the time thank you and your comments are well and duly noted working session sounds good between now and the time that it gets to the rules committee i will encourage the sponsor to do just that so we could ensure that everyone gets their amendments in so that we could better the bill that's that's before us

2:14:01 senator de graf the ranking member out of savannah you're recognized for your uh thank you thank you thank you mr chair uh to everyone um congratulations to the bill sponsor he gotta move forward but uh as everyone knows i voted no i stick to my guns in terms of we had some great discussion at the back before it was um the final decision was made so with those implementations again like i said i'm willing to support it but just stand now i'm going to stick to my guns and i'm going to be me thank you thank you for the time mr chair appreciate your comments uh senator de graf senator johnson any comments from you you good Senator President, everyone on that end is good, all right Senator Carrion you can close it out.

2:15:00 Thank you Mr. Chair, I just would like to thank all those who came out and spoke so eloquently this afternoon to provide testimony, every representative thank you so much for sharing your story with us and supporting this measure i want to say gracias merci thank you to senator giddens for giving this important issue the attention it deserves and bringing it forward within your committee and for signing on to this measure along with uh senator angel bolquez senator ray fonseca senator blyton and all the senators that voted today in favor The recommendations that were presented today, we're taking them. Amendments have been submitted. So when we come to rules, we will have a document that hopefully everyone feels more comfortable with. Every document, like we stated, is a living document, so we're working on it. I know we have a few tweaks to make, but I am confident that we can be done in rules. Like my colleague said, this is not a controversial measure. It's something new, and I believe it's necessary. So thank you once again to the testifiers also that represent the various government agencies for the hours that we've met, various meetings, and getting this together. So thank you. It's a win-win for all. Muchas gracias.

2:16:19 Thank you, Senator Carrion. The democratic process at its best. The measure was discussed. everyone isn't totally comfortable we respect everyone's position but as the chair of this committee I am confident that my colleagues will be able to address the other concerns and be able to amend this measure at least in the next two steps in this case there's three bites of the apple this is the first one the next one will be in rules and if others see even more amendments again I'm pretty sure that on session day it will be amended a third time so I want to thank each and every one of you for your participation here today the conversation really took longer than we anticipated but it was a good conversation uh and even more conversation needed so i'm pretty sure that colleagues will be reaching out uh to some of you in the government agencies again thank you so much and you are excused and we will recess for three minutes and then we will bring in our final group of testifiers committee and Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety is at recess for three minutes.

- 2:18:16 Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll see you next time. [3 such phrases repeated 12 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 2:24:16 and public safety for wednesday march 15 2023 is back on record we just completed two blocks black one we had the office of public defender this morning at 10 a.m which gave us a overview of their office operations and capital projects and initiatives followed by block two which started about 1 28 this afternoon where we discussed bill number 35 that's zero zero one three relating to the issuance of operators license and identification cards to allow applicants to obtain limited local purpose identification cards and operators license without providing certain federally required documents the measure was amended with much discussion and it was forwarded to the rules and judiciary committee which there will be more discussion and amendments in that committee now we're here at box three i want to apologize to the testifiers before us for the delay but i could have seen from your faces that you enjoyed that conversation taking place before as well but now you look a little tired so we'll try not to keep you here uh too long but madam clerk can you read uh block three uh the agenda item for block three into the record please thank you yes mr chair block three the committee will receive overview testimony for the virgin islands police department and the office of gun violence prevention not limited to updates on the department's operations, capital projects and initiatives. Testifiers, Honorable Ray Martinez, Commissioner, VI Police Department, Mr. Anthony Emanuel, Director, Office of Gun Violence Prevention.
- 2:26:16 Thank you. Good afternoon again, gentlemen. Starting with Mr. Emanuel, please just identify yourself, title and agency. Good afternoon, Senator Gittins, chairperson of the Homeland Security. Just identify yourself. Tony Emanuel, executive director of gun violence prevention. Thank you, sir. Damian Lang, good afternoon, chair, sorry.
- 2:26:47 Damian Lange, Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Violence Interrupter for St. Croix. Violence Interrupter. Thank you. Good afternoon, Bruce Flamon. I'm the Outreach Coordinator for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention for St. Thomas and St. John's. Thank you. Do you have anyone online? No, sir. Okay, just the three of you. Let me get those titles correct again for Mr. Lange. it's violence interrupter violence violence interrupter one more time the community of lemon Bruce Flemont I'm the community engagement outreach specialist community engagement outreach specialist for St. John and St. Thomas.
- 2:27:50 And of course, Mr. Emanuel, you're the director. All right, and you will be taking the lead on the testimony? Yes, sir. You may proceed at this time, sir. Good afternoon, Senator Kenneth Gittens and members of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, other members of the 34th Legislature, guests, and the listening public. My name is Tony Emanuel. I'm the Executive Director of the Office of Gun Bonds Prevention, and I appreciate this opportunity to come before you and share our outreach approach, progress strategies, and initiatives. Our mission of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention is to help prevent gun violence and increase public safety by utilizing community-based outreach approaches. Our approach is rooted in a public health approach to violence prevention, recognizing that reducing crime is accomplished through collaborative efforts from local and federal government agencies, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and community members. This public health approach to gun violence reduction does not replace, nor is it at odds with law enforcement, other government agencies, private businesses, or other community organizations that engage in outreach activities aimed at reducing violence or providing resources for our community. Its focus is simply prevention by addressing the systemic root causes of gun violence. The following gun violence reduction approach plan is separated into three sections, violence prevention, violence intervention, and community engagement. While recommendations are made in each of these three categories, the primary focus of this plan is on violence prevention and intervention. Violence prevention refers to the elimination or reduction of the underlying causes and risk factors that lead to violence.
- 2:29:38 Violence prevention efforts are designed to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. Violence intervention efforts, on the other hand, are designed to prevent the reoccurrence of violence or intervene and prevent the imminent act of violence. Both prevention and intervention hinge on deploying services that identify and address age and context-appropriate risk and protective factors. Violence prevention efforts are most targeted towards children and youth, whereas violence intervention efforts tend to be focused on the people who are at the greatest immediate risk of violence, which according to data are typically young adults or middle-aged adults. While violence prevention is a broad field encompassing various types of programs, effective violence intervention is more defined and narrowly focused through community engagement. violence prevention our goal is to implement a comprehensive coordinated territory-wide gun violence reduction strategy this comprehensive strategy that utilizes a data-driven process to identify the individuals or and or groups at the highest risk of committing or being involved in gun violence and deploying effective interventions with these individuals to include more in-depth and intensive services and wraparound support. GVRs has four core components data-driven identification of those individuals or groups at highest risk of gun violence, direct or respectful communication to those at considerable risk, intensive services wraparound support and exposure to opportunities, and

focused enforcement which entails sharing useful intelligence with local and federal law enforcement agencies to help guide increased enforcement on serious crime and violence. Now here it is and this is important to note that the Office of Gun Violence is not a law enforcement arm or

2:31:38 organization. We do not investigate shootings, we don't arrest suspects, we don't confiscate weapons, and but so for that fourth component we rely heavily on our local and federal law enforcement partners for the criminal enforcement piece of the comprehensive strategy. Most gun violence is tightly concentrated in a small number of high-risk young adults that share a common set of risk factors, including involvement in street crews, significant criminal justice history, often prior victimization, and a connection to a recent shooting, usually within the past 12 months. While the vast majority of people involved in shootings as victim or suspects are members of associates of street groups, or gangs, the motive for the shooting may not be typical of a traditional gang war. Here in the territory often shootings are precipitated by a personal conflict, misunderstanding, a simple argument, or relationship issues which include now the ubiquitous social media slights. It is not a coincidence that the vast majority of gun violence in the territory occurs in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty, blight, and individuals identifying according to data as high risk meaning individuals who have been considered suspects, victims or persons of interest in violent events. High crime neighborhoods are often those with dilapidated properties, empty lots, potholes, crumbling infrastructure, broken street lights, abandoned vehicles, overgrown bush and trees and other environmental factors that communicate to residents that the government does not care about them. Because of the creation of the governor's advisory council government has started to tear down the government silos and we have begun to work collaboratively with other agencies to tackle our territorial issues these theories of community engagement are remnant of the broken glass theory

2:33:30 where if a community doesn't allow small things to grow into bigger issues we would be a lot better off one instance of that is the recent shooting at Woodson high school although it was a very disturbing and traumatic event, I was extremely proud to be standing shoulder to shoulder displaying a unified front with the commissioner, superintendent, and staff from the Department of Education and the police commissioner and his officials of the police department as we attempted to assure parents that this incident will be handled and will take precautions to keep our children safe. Then I was again shown that the collaborative government system works and we worked in partnership with the police department's victims advocate, school counselors, and and the Department of Health's counselors providing counseling to students and staff of John H. Woodson days after the shooting. This process was invaluable and it displayed compassion and empathy to those that were directly or indirectly involved. The Office of Gun Violence also hit the streets gathering information and openly sharing any and everything with the Police Department to assist to bring this case to closure. Another example of community engagement that our office does is handling concerned citizen complaints. Sometimes citizens complain, they call the Office of Gun Violence to report suspicious behavior, possible illegal drug possession and dealing and illegal firearm possession and discharging of shots incidents. Here again, we are not law enforcement, but our office has responded to several of these complaints directly by insisting of advising them instead of advising the citizen that's not our function or not our job. We still go out. I'll give you an example we responded to a citizen felt that there was some drug dealing in her right behind her house and I went there and talked to her she was like very happy that we came out

2:35:21 and and looked at the issue and then after we did that we go to the police station and have the conversation with the officers the commander of the of the of the police district to see what we can come up with as a unified group to fix the problem. In addition to those types of instances, we also try to help several individuals find employment, assisted several survivors and victims by connecting with resources to assist them. Since September 2022, our office has either hosted, supported, participated, or sponsored over 30 community events within the territory. To help us get through our gun violence issues, we have partnered with the National Network for Safe Communities, starting working with government officials in the territory as early as 2014. During that time, the government and the National Network for Safe Communities shared information and assessment of the violence at the time that it was completed. The legislation later created a bill that was written into law creating the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. The Office of Gun Violence Prevention was created in efforts to curb the incidents of gun violence in the territory by implementing strategies aimed at preventing violence. To assist and continue the work that had been started, the government re-enlisted the services of the consulting team known as the National Network for Safe Communities in NSC. They responded to the territory and met with government officials, investigators, and the Director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention to complete an up-to-date assessment of our violent incidents. During March of 2022, the NSC staff conducted a problem analysis with the Virgin Islands and law enforcement partners in St. Croix and St. Thomas. Although some of the information gathered in St. Thomas was limited, the findings in the USVI are consistent with cities that the NSC has worked with to implement gun violence intervention strategies successfully. Groups in St. Thomas are particularly concentrated in specific housing projects across the island. Conflicts in St. Thomas were not driven by group interests but by personal disputes between

individuals. Some groups such as Bovoni and Round of Field consist of several small sets located within specific areas. Others such as Paul Pearson Garden, Oswald Harris Court include both groups located in these locations, but also acted as gathering points for other groups.

2 : 37 : 46 Areas such as content include both groups, such as content knolls, an unknown number of group of Hispanic immigrants also involved in violence. Drug selling and trafficking is an important activity of groups in St. Thomas and St. John. Given the proximity to neighboring jurisdictions such as Coral Bay and Smith Bay have a significant amount of drug activity and trafficking. Groups in St. Croix consist of a mix of older younger sets within larger groupings tied to specific geographical locations and housing projects. Groups have varying degrees of alliances based on their location, either in Frederickstead or Christianstead. However, these alliances are only operational when called upon. Law enforcement partners explain that the young individuals within these groups are more likely to be engaged in violence than the older individuals. Rivalries are primarily driven by problems between individuals rather than disputes for the group's direct benefit. This led to the the internal group split such as that of profit. Nine of the 16 groups in St. Croix are said to include teenage group members. These approaches cannot be successful without the collaborative effort of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention Advisory Council. The Advisory Council consists of the collection of local and federal law enforcement and government agencies, local businesses, nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups that provide support and resources for this outreach approach. The Office of Gun Violence Prevention Team consists of three main positions on each island, the Survivor Engagement Specialist, the Violence Interrupter, and the Community Engagement Coordinator Specialist. Currently, we have a Community Engagement Coordinator in St. Thomas, in St. John District, and a Violence Interrupter in St. Croix. The Governor's strong support to the Office and having created the Advisory Council brings government agencies to the table in an effort to break down our silos and collaboratively effectively work on issues that plague our community. The energy of the Advisory Council is that of hope and cooperation. That makes

2 : 39 : 45 me very excited about the possibilities for successful outreach initiatives and strategies. Currently, we are receiving very positive feedback from the community we are serving. People have been contacting the office offering suggestions and thanking us for doing what we do. Other organizations are requesting our participation, support, and events and programs that are geared for anti-violence with the support of our advisory council partners our community and you the legislature our opportunities are boundless the possibility of changing mindsets and teaching young and older people how to communicate with each other effectively and manage disputes without violence is an incredible opportunity to give our young people hope and change their way of thinking that their lives are less than valuable and that they have a shorter life expectancy than everybody else, we have the opportunity to make them feel loved and valued. Programs like the Greatest Show on Earth, Daddy's Day Out, the Youth Talent Showcase, give them praise and feeling of self-worth, while at the same time occupying their time and energy distracting them from getting involved in criminal activity or destructive behaviors. Working with other local and federal government agencies gives the opportunity for us to access resources and support mechanisms for our residents as well as outreach and law enforcement support for safer communities. Through education and training programs we have opportunities to make our residents employable, teach them sustainable life skills that can improve their own quality of life and marketability. This also includes connecting those citizens that feel disenfranchised or desperate for help or support with appropriate resources. Over the past several months since the school year began we have talked to over 2,000 students in large and small groups from just about every high school in the territory, some of the middle schools, and now we're reaching out to elementary schools as well. Addressing the older population, we have the opportunity to reduce tensions between warring groups and prevent needless violence and bloodshed. We want to create a community poised for mutual respect and caring for one another. Our violence interrupter has been able to quell several disputes within our communities and has literally saved lives. This was the first Christmas festival in over a decade where we didn't have a serious gun violence incident. Unfortunately, sometimes despite all efforts of preventing violence, someone comes out of nowhere and violates the law or initiates community violence. It's almost guaranteed one violent encounter will spark some retaliation. We just pray

2 : 42 : 12 we catch it before other people react poorly. I'm going to start to give you an idea of some of the initiatives and programs that we've been doing. The The Community Resource List is an ongoing program where we create and keep and update a list of programs that are available in the territory. What I've found since I took this office is that we've discovered that there are an incredible amount of people out there doing amazing things on their own. Some people out of their own pocket. Matter of fact, there's a sister Ayesha in St. Croix who's sponsoring a victim's march and vigil next month. And so we're gonna be participating with her and helping her organize this thing. And so, but she's been doing it by herself since her son got killed. So she contacted me and said, hey, you know, can you help me? And I'm like, absolutely. So we know that there's more people that are doing it. There's government agencies that are doing programs that are available. And what's happening is that a lot of people just don't know that these things are available.

- 2:43:21 So the resource list is important. It's ongoing and growing. It's a living document. I have to give props to the St. Croix Foundation because they have a huge resource list and it assisted us with this project. The Create Hope project is where a program and outreach effort and partnership with the Department of Education where we speak to young people that believe that they won't live past the age of 25. We have staff of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention with assistance from faith-based groups and others in the community members to go into the schools, get presentations on transformative life experiences. We talk about choices, decisions, and consequences. Back to basics, citizenship and a leadership class.
- 2:44:11 This is ongoing, I go into the high schools and junior high schools and teach what I call a leadership class, but it's actually a class where we talk about self-esteem, conflict resolution, anti-bullying and peer pressure. Save someone you love, this is in a planning stage. This is when someone is seriously injured, primarily we would always rely on our very capable emergency medical services to respond, stabilize, and transport victims of trauma. This is the best course of action. But what we're finding realistically what happens is somebody gets shot and their buddy throws them in the back of the truck and they drive to the hospital. Unfortunately what's happening is that we looked at the data from most of it and last year eight people were transported in personal vehicles and actually last two weekends ago we had six people shot in St. Croix. They were all taken to the hospital in personal vehicles. The problem is that they're transported without proper triage or trauma care. So the the Someone You Love, the Save Someone You Love program is where I want to go into the neighborhoods and and teach combat trauma care and provide kits in different locations throughout the territory so that if somebody has a traumatic injury, we can stabilize them until the ambulance gets there or stabilize them and take them to the hospital.
- 2:45:47 Because what's happening, they either die on the way, die on the apron, or they die on the operating table because they lost too much blood. If we're able to keep the blood in their system, we have a chance of saving their lives. I'm gonna ask you to try to stick to the testimony as well and just in the essence of time. Okay, get them working. Many residents feel desperate and disenfranchised because of lack of employment or ability to afford simple necessities. The outreach program in partnership with human services, corrections, reentry organizations, the University of Virgin Islands and Department of Labor and Department of Personnel is centered on assisting individuals in obtaining gainful employment through the workforce or entrepreneurship. Wellness in the VI, oftentimes residents are not connected with appropriate services that can assist them. The outreach program, which is created by housing authority is done in partnership with our office, the Justice Department, the Virgin Islands Police Department, Human Services, Health Department, and LEPC.
- 2:46:48 The Office of Gun Violence participates in the wellness group that sponsors wellness days in the different housing communities. At these events, government agencies, nonprofit, faith-based groups and other community members are invited to share a day where activities are scheduled encouraging residents to interact with organizations and agencies that may provide needed resources to assist them. We have done several of these over the past several months. Bags Across America, one of my favorite programs is for domestic violence. We assist the Women's Coalition of St. Croix with local sororities and fraternities where the program encourages the donation of gently used purses or handbags and comfort items be donated to the Women's Coalition. The last time we did this event we collected over 200 bags and gave them to the Women's Coalition and when a woman is in the shelter she's given that bag and it makes her feel good. It's some creature comfort things that make the young lady feel better in a really tough situation. The National Night Out in St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John is a national program designed to engage the community by hosting an event that highlights organizations and businesses that provide service to the community. The Office of Gun Violence works with this project in partnership with Law Enforcement Planning Commission, local law enforcement agencies, and local fraternities. We participate in this event in September on each island. At this event was a peace march followed by a short program, motivational speakers, music, and free food and drinks for participants.
- 2:48:20 Walk and Talks is an ongoing outreach effort done in partnership with the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Virgin Islands Police Department, Health Department, and Human Services where the Office of Gun Violence Prevention staff, Police Officers, Health Department, and Human Service representatives take some time and walk and talk to residents in various areas to make an effort to engage community members through conversations. Our violence interrupter and survivor specialists along with selected individuals support organization walk the turfs and housing communities to create dialogue in hopes of identifying systemic issues and problems within that community as well as diffusing issues and brokering truces the greatest show on earth the greatest show on earth is sponsored by the office of gun violence prevention and working in partnership with the antilly school white code property procurement the saint thomas taxi association private businesses and non-profit organizations this event is created and organized by the community engagement coordinator the greatest show on earth fosters an opportunity for organizations to highlight their programs and their services and there is a fee to attend the event and those proceeds used to donate to that non-profit organization that participate in the event many of these organizations are struggling to be able to continue to provide services so this This helps them raise funds.

- 2:49:41 Daddy's Day Out, which is my violent interrupters program, Daddy's Day Out is an outreach event sponsored in partnership with the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, fathers in the community, the Department of Agriculture, Parks and Recreation, Office of the Governor, the Virgin Islands Police Department, and private businesses. This event is scheduled quarterly and is created and organized by the violence interrupter of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. The goal is to provide a safe, alcohol-free, and violent-free environment for one full day. In this safe place at the Agriculture Fairgrounds, families can bring their children for a day of food and activities that bring the community together. Although the focus is on fathers, mothers are also very much welcomed.
- 2:50:21 The organizers provide free food, drinks, and prizes for participation events throughout the day. The Group Violence Intervention University, which we just completed recently, The Group Violence Intervention University, held in November, was sponsored by the Office of Gun Violence Prevention in partnership with University of the Virgin Islands' UVI cell, the National Network for Safer Communities, and the Office of the Governor. The Gun Violence University was a summit and training opportunity for senior government agency leadership and those individuals designated to be intricately involved in the delivery of the NNSC Group Violence Intervention Model. The GVI was hosted on both islands for two days and held at the University of the Virgin Islands and we had about 40 participants on each island. Community Outreach Prevention Training.
- 2:51:08 The Office of Gun Violence Prevention goes out in the community and offers training, presentations to armed community members with ways to reduce conflict and best practice for dealing with violent encounters as well as general personal safety tips. Myself and my staff and other professionals in the field offer classes and presentations at workplace violence prevention, conflict resolution, customer service, and active shooter response. Virgin Islands Star Search and Youth Talent Shows, November, we have one coming up this weekend, Saturday. We have one that's going to be Star Search Talent Competition to provide an activity that brought people together to promote support and acknowledge the amazing talent we have on our island. It also provides an opportunity for the winner to move on to a national talent competition venue. The Starship Talent Competition is a collaborative effort for the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Department of Education, private business, and non-profit organizations. Radio show and public service announcements ongoing, and actually we'll be starting our own radio show in March to help publicly promote and inform residents of the mission, outreach programs, and activities of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. We will be providing a platform to communicate and share information with listeners, as well as create an opportunity for young people to share their views on our own radio show called Level Up on Radio 1 AM 100 in an effort, well, I'm sorry, 1000, in an effort to present the community information of activities, entrepreneurship, government agency updates, and other partners in the community to share information. The show will be broadcast territory-wide and utilizing live streaming on all social media platforms. The program will cover a range of topics that promote positive ideas for self-improvement, territory safety, anti-violence.
- 2:52:57 Our first show will broadcast March 15th, which is this Saturday at 12 noon. Other activities that we've been involved in, survivors' walks and vigils with other non-profit organizations, survivors supporting meeting with the Women's Coalition, domestic violence symposiums, Put Down the Gun, Walk and Rally with VIPD, health and non-profit organizations safety presentations with the rotary clubs delta sigma theta sorority the christmas children's parade car show sound system competition the martin luther king march team dating focus groups human trafficking awareness programs uvi on the green community day which is also this weekend coming up sunday project safe neighborhoods re-entry programs and And in April, we will have, during the carnival, we will have a day where the youth entrepreneurs actually open up the carnival during the daytime, and they'll be running the carnival, children will be running it during the day. It's going to be like an entrepreneurship day for young people.
- 2:54:03 In summary, the most successful, the most essential work to address the root cause of crime and violence should focus on eliminating poverty, improving the quality of and access to education, well-paying jobs, and improving basic quality of life issues. That essential long-term work can and should be bolstered by efforts to demonstrate reinvestment in neighborhoods through greening and cleaning, which research has shown is correlated with reductions in gun violence. The Office of Gun Violence Prevention is working to be a part of the change that can create safer communities within the territory and restore hope and peace. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to share the Governor's Office of Gun Violence Prevention.
- 2:54:42 Thank you, Director Emmanuel. We will open up the floor to colleagues for six minutes and we'll start with Senator Franklin Johnson and St. Croix, followed by the Senator At-Laj Bolkis, Jr. At this time, Senator Johnson, you recognize for your six minutes? Good evening. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's been a long day. Good evening to the people of the Territory, good evening to my colleagues, and good evening to the testifier. As I was going through your very long and in-depth testimony, there are only three main positions. How do you cover the needs of the community with that number of staff? Do they work with volunteers? How many volunteers do you have?

- 2:55:31 well we we're looking for um more position to be filled we have people in the process right now and i've been doing interviews we do when we do events we remember we're doing them in collaboration with other organizations so it's not just us out there we do we do have other people and other organizations that are involved um and we do have volunteers actually when um when mr lang goes out to the schools to teach sometimes he has other people with him um but But we're, and when Bruce Ramon does his events, there's other people that are involved. He has other non-profit organizations that are involved as well. So there is a collection of volunteers. I can't give you an exact number because each event is different. I mean, actually you've been to Daddy's Day Out, and you've seen all those people there volunteering and helping out as well. I wanna ask you this question.
- 2:56:25 Are you using a national network for safe community model As your guide for the GVR? Yes, it is our model, and that is more towards the homicide, handling the homicide part. So the GVI model deals with shooting reviews, looking into investigations, working with law enforcement more closely. That's that part of it. The other stuff, the outreach stuff that I just, all the initiatives that I just laid out to you, that's another side of what we're doing. We've realized that it's not just dealing with homicide that is gonna solve this problem. We have to get into our communities. We have to engage our young people. We have to have conversations with them. So we're doing both simultaneously. We're doing the GVI with the help of the NNSC, and we're doing all our outreach stuff that I just explained to you.
- 2:57:27 So now, with the gun violence surgery, it requires a partnership with a wraparound service. How many agencies makes up your wraparound service, and who are they? It depends on the need, but our advisory council includes the National Guard, VIPD, LEPC, personnel, Department of Personnel, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, parks and recreation, labor, hospitals, private organizations, private businesses, and faith-based groups, the clergy.
- 2:58:08 For your strategy to work, it's gonna take some money. Besides the money that the legislature give, do you have any grants that you have applied for, and have you received any grant? And if you did, which organization you got the grant from, approximately how much you're receiving grant thus far if you did we have an arpa grant that's that's that's helping us pay for the consulting fees with the nsc and that was for approximately five hundred thousand dollars all right that's good good to you that you're getting some grants because you're gonna you're gonna need as much funding as possible if you're going to be successful in in what you're doing and i i heard you said you're trying to hire some more um staff the budget that was approved for you was that sufficient and would that cover the additive staff that you're looking to get two minutes we probably need to increase our budget because i think what's happening is what what a lot of my comp my my hard hurdle is recruiting good talented workers and maintaining um you know retaining my good workers if somebody comes up and offers in either these guys more money they might leave you know so i have to uh we certainly need to increase that budget to uh to to attract the the appropriate candidate now you said that you interview some folks already what what what is the delay or the whole up in you getting these folks on board well i'm very particular about who i hire i just don't want to fill a seat with a body um i have i have to say Currently right now, the two employees I have are doing yeoman's work and they're excellent.
- 2:59:57 It's like, if I have to create this surgical team, I want the best surgeons on it. So I'm very particular of who I wanna hire and I'm making sure that we get the best talent that's available to us. What is your most pressing issue that you need to prioritize at this moment? regarding gun violence? Probably the most pressing thing is communicating with the different TERFs and keeping our peace. We had, unfortunately, St. Thomas kind of led our year with eight homicides, and so that's not pretty. So we're trying to make sure that we have an ability to go into these communities and quell that violence by seeing what is going on, how we can deal with it. Time.
- 3:00:53 The other issue that we have is the schools. You know, when we started the school year out, there were like fights in the schools almost every day, and especially in St. Croix, it's central, and so my violence interrupter went into the high schools and we quelled that, and now we don't have as many fights as we used to in the beginning of the year. Maybe it's just growing pains, but we're doing good work. Thank you very much, I appreciate it. I see Mr. Daniel Lang, you look like he tired.
- 3:01:23 You need some help from Mr. Lang. Yeah, he's a soldier, man, he's good to go. I know that. Thank you guys for all what you do. I chose a big supporter of Daddy's Day Out. Anytime Mr. Lang ready to do his program, I put my money where my mouth is, and I donate and support it. a very good program and i remember mr lang saying he's going to try to take it to st thomas so i hope that you guys could get an initiative going also on the other islands thank you very much thank you very much uh the honorable senator johnson um you know i i want to congratulate uh you mr emmanuel and the whole crew um i know that you are extremely busy uh doing a lot of stuff in the community trying to um continue your mission to reduce gun violence i think just recently um i was involved with you with the dr martin luther king march in the emancipation garden and also when you had the car show and the performance in the parking lot uh just the other day

you know i was i was looking at at um at um your your presentation here And, you know, it seems, and I quote, you said, most gun violence is tightly concentrated on a small number of very high-risk young individuals. And I noticed you particularly mentioned prior victimization and being involved in a shooting within the past 12 months. So that means that a lot of the victims have been involved. so it's we kind of know what is going on right yes what what I mean by that is that typically the people when we when we looked at the entire population right most of the people in our population aren't doing crime when we look at the crime and the data shows that the that most of the crimes and the homicides are caused by a small number of people and they're repeat performers they're frequent flyers they've been involved in the criminal justice system over and over again and so those folks are the ones that tend to continue to be involved in criminal behavior and put themselves at risk because that's their life they're you know if they're involved in an illegal activity it's going to be a risky position for them so they wind up getting getting involved in shootouts getting shot getting stabbed because of their lifestyle and their

3:04:02 choices yes yes um thank you for that um uh senator bolkus um you're recognized for your five minutes thank you thank you mr chair and good afternoon colleagues good afternoon listening and viewing audience and good afternoon to the testifiers uh the office of gun violence prevention uh instituted by act 8423 with a mission to foster community-based strategies and help prevent violence and increase public safety um i looked at some numbers and puerto rico and the usvi's gun debt rates outpaced all 50 states in 2020 largely fueled by gun trafficking and the use of illegal firearms coincidentally in 2020 the usvi was second leading in the importation of firearms recovered by law enforcement among all states and territories and you know i think data is a huge part of your job um you know to determine the rate and number of gun deaths um you know it's important that we collect data and i i think that there's different types of data and of course you would be able to clarify because you are the subject matter expert but i'm thinking firearm suicide community-based gun violence uh domestic partner gun violence shootings mass shootings unintentional shootings i mean the list can go on and on right but how and where are you collecting your data your data uh to target at risk students or communities well we get we get it we get data from education we get data from the police department we get data from the hospital and we are collecting our own data every time we go out and we talk to kids we we we identify when when mr lang goes into the schools with the help of the board of ed and counselors we identify which kids in that school are at risk and then we we track them we track what they're doing and we've had some kids that we've talked to in our class that have wound up in violent incidents

3:06:08 so we are as as our office starts to grow because i'm the first guy right there was nobody there's nobody that set the template up for me right so i'm building this thing from the ground up so we are starting to track data ourselves as well as collecting data from other organizations very good i didn't hear human services do you have a relationship with them in order to help target or obtain data for uh families in need yeah their human services is on our advisory council yes so yes we we we work very closely with human services we work very closely with the health department they're on our advisory council as well what about non-profit organizations yeah absolutely yeah okay okay very good non-profit clergy very good very good so how can we improve more effectively to interrupt gun violence how are we doing that how are we interrupting by having events uh school visits um what are you running any programs that specifically speak to that yeah that whole the whole list of initiatives and strategies that i just that i talked about those are all different programs and some of them include going into the schools we do um we do a we're in the schools a lot because that's a squeaky wheel you know so we we we feel that so if we change their attitudes and we and we communicate with them we have the courageous conversations we try to change them change their decision-making process their their their lack of fear of consequences when we go in to talk to them we try to change their mindset and it takes time it takes time is that going to turn on a die agreed agreed so in communities where gun violence is a common place what what traumatizing psychological impacts do individuals and

3:08:01 families collectively face you know with the gunshots late at night trying to sleep you know you wake up the baby's crying i mean how how how do we try to curtail that type of activity you know and that's more of a like night time 3 a.m type of activity that takes place and i know people right now that i speak to that have to go through that um several times a week i'm trying to get rest and there's gunshots at three in the morning so how do we how do we deal with that exactly i know that there's a shot spotters system um but you know that is a another issue as well and i think maybe that falls into the purview of vipd supposedly well yeah shot spotter has belonged to the police department but but to get to your point what happens is and what we're what we're seeing on the ground is that unfortunately our young people have become desensitized to violence um you know this shooting at woodson i mean we we talked to kids and some of them were like no it don't matter even though we know it was a bb gun but while some kids were traumatized others were like oh so what you know so we we know that there is different levels of how people handle us the shots at night i mean some people are just totally frightened while others are like as long as it come through my window i'm good okay time has the uh mr chair may i please have one wrap-up question you may thank you mr chair how has the office of gun prevention uh

thought about creating or or working with young people to have them act as advocates in communities like maybe forming a coalition of some sort of different youths from different communities to help um with you know assisting you with what you're trying to do for them yeah we've identified young people when when mr lang goes to the high schools and talk

3:09:55 usually after the talk kids come up to him and they volunteer and they say we can help you out so we're using them as other youth mentors to to to try to change people's mindsets okay thank you mr chair for the time and i think thank you i want to say something i want to let him finish thank you uh mr balkus junior you may uh respond mr thank you chair to the question ask Mr. Borges, as far as like the individuals in the community, so what I did was, on behalf of my boss allowing me to do it, I went directly into the communities. And believe it or not, most of the men in the communities, whether they live on this side of the fence or that side of the fence, they don't agree with the shooting at night. People don't actually like that. So what What they did was, men decided, watcha, hold it down.

3:10:53 You know, and when certain people speak, it's stronger than VIPD, they listen. And we have had good results, but then you still have young men that, they're gonna be young men. You know, some of them we can't get to, but the ones that we do get to, it works. Thank you, Mr. Lang. We'll move on to Senator DeGraff, followed by Senator Francis Jr. Senator DeGraff, you recognize for your... Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, go to Mr. Vice Chair. Sorry. Yes, thank you. Senator Fonseca. Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

3:11:39 You know, the public defender was here before us earlier today. And I know that, you know, every time a trigger is pulled, it costs the Virgin Islands, you know, resources, you know, the ambulance have to come to the scene, you know, they transport it to the hospital, depend on the injury, may need emergency surgery, you know, there may be an intensive care. You know, then the police investigation, Department of Justice, if someone is arrested, you know, the public defender. You know, the public defender, for just this year, right, there's 101 new cases. But he told us today that it's about \$20,000 per case for the public defender. So I want to just put this into numbers so that the public can understand the amount of resources and the actual costs and the amount of people that's involved. So I don't know if you would have a number, because it's off the top of your head, but Mr. Emmanuel, more or less, what does it cost the Virgin Islands per each case? it varies it's like imagine taking a big boulder and throwing it into a small lake and those ripples are what happens so the average the average ambulance ride is about anywhere from 15 to \$1,800 the average stay in the hospital is about three grand a day emergency room visit is about \$2,000 and that's if you just if you're in and out but if you need to be taken into a trauma

3:13:27 a surgeon, that's another \$15,000 for emergency if they got to crack your chest, all right? And then if you live past that, then you have therapy and rehab, which could go for months. God forbid you're in a wheelchair or crippled, then that's a whole different cost of experiences. Then if you die, then there's, you know, an \$8,000 to \$10,000 funeral that you got to deal with depending on how much they love you so it it depends you know those numbers we could we could just go on and on because then you maybe the guy worked for somebody or maybe it was his business and he got killed then that business shuts down then we lose all that income and that money you know so it's just then the courts involved it is it is an ongoing octopus of problems when we have somebody gets shot and you have two different sides of it you lose the victim right and then that family has to deal with losing their loved ones and and then you have the family of the perpetrator that either goes to jail or the family has to deal with dealing with the citizens knowing that their son or daughter is a perpetrator of this crime and then the expenses the legal expenses that come with that um so it we could we could go round and round and round with this yeah and you know you know i i i have to congratulate you because i know mr lang works hard very competent and also bruce flamont um you know it's a great great staff i wanted to go to your presentation with the save someone you love um because i wanted i wanted to emphasize this because

3:15:23 it happens someone is shot and and people take the victim and they put them in the car so what's the message that you want to give to the public when something like that happens someone gets shot and they're bleeding well here's what happens and and somebody gets shot and there's a there's a collection of folks that break their phone out and start taking pictures. All right, so that doesn't help at all. So you put Ricky in the back seat and you're saying, hey, hold on, buddy, we gonna get there. And you're driving 50 miles an hour down the road. And we had one last year, I think last year, the car crashed.

3:16:01 Guy put the guy in the back of the car, tried to go to the hospital, crashed on the way. But they put the guy in the back seat and they're not doing anything. And it's as simple as me applying direct pressure on a wound, trying to keep the body in it. That's something we can teach anybody. They make little gel packs that you can put inside the wound to stop the bleeding. If we, if those eight people that, most of those people that got transported to the hospital and died, some of them might have lived if somebody had just done direct pressure instead of throwing them in the backseat saying, hold on, we're gonna make it. You ain't make it. So that's what I'm saying. If we learn to take some initiatives and do the initial

care, I mean it's just like, I was a cop for 25 years and I've been in law enforcement for 40.

- 3:16:55 And the whole thing, trauma kits for police, combat wounds, I was a Marine before that, so you know, combat trauma. If we teach our citizens how to do combat, and it's not just for shooting. What if your Uncle Wilbur is painting his house and falls off and breaks his femur bone? It'd be great if your neighbor knew how to handle that so he doesn't bleed out inside. Simple things. We could save a lot of people from a lot of stuff like that. Mr. Chair, can I just be allowed to wrap up? You may wrap up.
- 3:17:22 Yes. The trauma kits. Do you get donations from the community? For example, these kits, I notice you want to have them staged in strategic locations. Do you have funding? I really support that idea. Do you have funding to have these kids? Well, I'm hoping to get some grant money for it or, you know, and whatever the legislature can help me out with, that'd be great, you know? So yeah, we're looking at, that's why it's in progress and planning because I'm trying to find out how I can get that. I have to bring, you know, the trainers in to train the trainers because I want our EMS people or our local people to go out and train in the community. I mean, we don't want to see somebody from the States come train our people how to save our own lives.
- 3:18:10 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Fonseca, and Director, in the future, in your haste to ask for more funding, I'd love the Senator to finish, and then you can anxiously request what you're asking for. I want more money. Senator DeGraff, you recognize for your six minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening, colleagues. Good evening, testifiers. You know, I'm glad you mentioned about the CLS, because when I was deployed to Iraq, I had the CLS training combat lifesaver, where you keep those gel packs and stop in blood. You have a tourniquet. We even had IV bags, but we could give IVs and help until.
- 3:18:57 So that rings go to my ear. I'm happy to hear that. You know, regardless of what, you're going to be measured by the amount of murders they have in the territory. What is the officer gun violence doing as if he could prevent these murders? But that's going to probably be a measuring stick. But in your testimony, there's one thing you said, and I don't like it, and I'll tell you why. My staff and I are about the work, and not the credit for when something goes well. What we have not been doing well is public promotion, meaning we are not very good at tooting our own horn, and consequently, many people still aren't aware of what exactly our office does, or what we are responsible for, or what we have been doing. Your whole testimony, that's the only problem I have with it. Because, like you just said, your background, of 25 years of police i had 26 at 23 years in the military you got two beasts with you um and i mean it with with utmost respect daddy's night out the gentleman had before he become a part of this the greatest show on earth blues vermont doing things in this so you have individuals who come highly recommended you know i was watching the ncaa basketball games the other the night I saw Mr. Lang I put the games aside to finish here what you're saying because he captivated me you know I end up on the other side of the the interim as a police you engage a lot of these young men you change their lives how you you know you deal with them you get them to respect versus making that arrest you take a gun and say hey I'm gonna turn this gun in but I'm gonna give you a chance the differences you make so to not toot your own horn and not talk about the great things that you're doing i don't like that do it do it push it because hey you guys doing the work um
- 3:21:00 do you have a collaboration with a police athletic league pal yes okay great um some other good programs i know they had was the law on you mr roy chesterfield had that when when i was a vipd uh again that's a great program the man up program through department of education they had that program with university of virgin islands last weekend those are things so to follow up okay good good you know i'm happy to hear that because really and truly what you're doing becomes invaluable because people are dying now i was able to pass legislation regarding gun parts coming into the territory that's how a lot of parts guns are coming in also you know i'd like you to follow up with vipd and that and if you have to do a campaign regarding that because it's another viable source of where firearms are coming in regardless of what you do you will be measured by the amount of people getting killed they ain't talking about how much people you save oh we just had eight mortals or so what are gun violence doing right it's not fair but it's how people look at the office of gun violence and how it's measured and and i think again um as a former police military if i could be of any service to you call me you know you know again it is to help out because for me i have a concept i try to save everybody that way if you say one or two you have done something some people try to save one or two then if you don't save them you lose but i try to save everybody so again thank you for what you're doing keep doing it it's not an easy job but it is going to take that sticking with it sticking with it sticking with it until the murders stop because that's what people are going to look at and and we need help but as a community effort is what it takes so don't ever think you have to do it by yourself yeah that's why i volunteer to assist if any anywhere you can because that's what the entire community should be doing not just non-profit not we're going to
- 3:23:15 provide money for you and think i could give you a trillion dollars it means nothing if you don't get a help if we don't get across to the young men and the young women and finally before i go is have you given any classes or been a part of any

classes of young entrepreneurs business ownership a homeowner if you have the vi slice program get these young men young women involved hey how they could own a piece of the rock own something here and teaching cpr classes because in addition to the sale ls super you save their life regular hey you know i'm eating them i'm choking how do i help save a life those are things that may instill some pride and you know and when you talk about the broken window um theory yeah it is a fact i'm doing a cleanup in in my neighborhood, Savan, next week. And again, trying to get out some of them abandoned cars and address some of these things. So again, keep doing what you're doing.

3:24:14 I stand in full support. Thank you for what you do. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator DeGraff, Senator Francis Jr., Senator President, you're recognized for your six minutes, followed by Senator Francis Heiliger. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to everyone, And good afternoon, of course, to the testifiers, Mr. Emanuel, Mr. Damien Lange, and Mr. Fleman Lewis. I mean, I'm sorry, Bruce Fleman. Bruce Fleman, keep the enthusiasm up.

3:24:51 I certainly love the passion, and that's what we need in this community, men that cares for this community. Because, you know, a young man with a bright future will rarely take a dark path. i like the fact that you're going into our schools and you're making an impact in our schools because of course dismantling the school to prison pipeline is critical in us being able to make some inroads is what we're seeing here happening in our community i wanted to ask you what's the frequency of um meetings occurring with the advisory council how frequent do they meet quarterly quarterly get quarterly we also and then sometimes i meet with uh vipd only to do shooting reviews so that's a it's like a different group not everybody can be involved in that because it's sensitive information so uh we have quarterly typically and then i meet separately with vipd on shooting reviews can you take a minute to just speak to how um in terms of violence interrupters and your action there when a crime is committed especially with a firearm tell me what happens next um for your unit when we're notified we respond to the scene we try to talk to victims uh the survivors we don't interfere with the investigation i try to stay out of their way And then my violence interrupter will go into the turf where the crime occurred and get information, try to find out what's going on and see if there's an opportunity for retaliation.

3:26:36 And then Mr. Lange will, if he suspects a particular person may be the one that's going to retaliate, he actually contacts that person and tries to make sure and dissuade them from retaliating. So when the crime happened in a particular area, you already have a sense of, because of your work within the various communities, be it from Mr. Fleming or Mr. Lange, you already have a sense of who possibly may be involved in that particular situation. So, will that give you a jump start in terms of who you'll talk to and how you'll engage?

3:27:17 Go ahead. Yes, yes, Senator President, yes. That's how we don't actually look at the fact that, you know, in every neighborhood, we have to understand out of a thousand people there's only maybe three people that's actually committing these crimes so when we look at it later and we hear okay this happened over here we know we could target these individuals inside our farm where I could talk to these guys where I could talk to these guys in castle to see how can we fix this problem and if it gonna be a situation that's gonna be ongoing or okay we're just because of this girl and we we nip it in the butt and it done right there. Some situations we could find out more information about, some we can't. And some of the information I've received is that again, because of this involvement, it seems that the VIPD is more prone to have some solvability in the cases, because in fact, individuals in these respective community based on their work with the Office of Gun Violence, is that they're willing to turn over, they're willing to speak to you all in regards to who may have been involved in this situation because they're too, are very concerned with what's happening in their community and they're trying to quell the situation.

3:28:32 Is that a fact? Yes, Senator President. And when we, like for instance, the other day, I got a call from a lady who was complaining about, you know, drug dealing in the backyard. She said she couldn't talk to the police. You know, so she called my office. So we go, all of the three of us went and talked to the woman and she pointed out, she got, I can't go with it to the turf, but I can show you where it is. And we went and we looked at the house and we tried to figure out what we're gonna do. And also, Senator, when we get information, as soon as we get what we consider credible information, we share that with VIPD. Because we want to make sure that we're sharing this information in real time to make sure that they're as informed as we are.

3:29:16 So, are you in touch with the VIPD's intelligence unit? Are you having contact and collaboration with them? The intelligence unit, not directly, but with the homicide investigators, yes. What about the situation where we find ourselves that we have individuals in our community that seems to want to carry a gun for self-preservation? How do you address that particular situation? I mean they're walking around with fear and even though when they're apprehended we have seen where the same individuals a second or third time Seems to be caught with a possession of a firearm How do you interact with that person again to discourage them in regards to the field of need for self-preservation and carrying a gun? It's it's hard to change that mindset because they feel they have to have that weapon to protect themselves especially

those involved in illegal activity those that are dealing drugs they feel they have to have a weapon with them to protect themselves from being robbed so it's very hard to keep them to say okay put down your gun give up your gun they're like no I'm not gonna give up my gun so it's a that's a hard nut to crack now what we try to do is when we when so when we talk to our younger people our kids in middle school you know we try to tell them that the consequences of carrying a gun are incredibly severe and long-lasting and that you really can't win you know and truth be told and I tell people I'll talk some people call me sometimes they should I get a concealed carry license and I go you know what if you are carrying a weapon somebody's gonna jump you and take the weapon from you you're not gonna unless you deal with handling a handgun on a regular basis in a train like police or military you're just gonna be another victim very well mr. chair I heard my time call um you you may go ahead and wrap up okay if I may just wrap up with two two other quick points sure what what is your collaboration with the federal law

3:31:23 enforcement agencies is there any collaboration whatsoever with them the the federal organizations are in the advisory council as well we have the FBI, ATF, and we work with a group called Project Safe Neighborhoods where we collaborate and do programs and events throughout the territory. Very well. Again, I want to thank you for all that you're doing from the Office of Gun Violence. It's not a perfect unit, but certainly you're making some inroads and you're making some progress there. I think I want to leave with the message that each and every one of us in this community have to be a mentor. We have to be able to take somebody under a wing and again i'll be able to to turn the ties of what we're seeing here a young man with a bright future would rarely take a dark path and we have a responsibility this community to at least try to assist one individuals thank you very much mr chair thank you very much to the office of gun violence thank you uh mr president point of inquiry senator the graph uh thank thank you mr chair through the chair uh along the same lines of um you going into the turfs and stuff what degree of safety do you take for yourselves and how do you address that and could you provide that information to us through the chair um so as we are um senator you know i i don't own if i am i'm not allowed to be around if i am but what i do is i go with the fact that i use my credibility in the streets that i had when i was there i lived on that side of the fence i don't have no protection i go with the with the fact that god there were me and through that and through so many men seeing me make a change in my life that it it just to make them

3:33:12 fall in love with me like for real like they actually like me even man that didn't like me before just because they see the change in me it's like a light and they're attracted to it so i go i able to go in any talk like the other day i was yesterday i was telling him i'm going to bovani and couple other places to talk to people but it's the talk to try to get some kind of peace okay so director look out for your people still though oh yeah we are police so we we understand but thank you for the time mr chair thank you uh senator de graf senator francis alligator you recognize for your six minutes thank you good evening to the testifiers to the people of the territory to my colleagues once again um my first set of questions are based on what data have you collected or researched from interaction with the public and getting feedback as to why they believe or you have gathered why gun violence is such an issue here in this territory it's mostly personal the data we collected the experiences that we gather if you look at the the amount of cases that we've had um they are targeted events is that somebody somebody you know said something like last week in st croix we had you know a guy came out of a club with his girlfriend and somebody said something to her and they started shooting at each other they spraying and panned and six people wound up in the hospital over you know my man and his girl so it's that kind of stuff that we got going on and and and and so when we when we talk to our young people or even our older people we when we are in turfs talking to folks like why does that send you off why does that trigger you so quickly that you react so poorly so we try to get them to think about their consequences look you you're gonna shoot this guy because he used to go out with your girl or he said she's cute or maybe she's not cute but that's not a reason to kill a dude you know i

3:35:13 happen to agree with you um when it comes to gun violence um for me i live in a round the field area and that area is like a christmas light of gunshots on a regular basis and when I say regular every other night it's to the point I come home they're shooting off in the middle of the night they're shooting off if we are aware that this is a well-known area where guns are shooting off consistently what are you doing with partnering with the police department to really get into that area as it relates to prevention of violence to either get your hands on these guns or talk to the individuals that are shooting off these guns actually mr lang goes in those neighborhoods and tell the folks hey stop shooting your gun up in the air because because because that's what a lot of times they sometimes they're not shooting at each other just shooting up in the air they're shooting into the ground it's like why you're wasting ammo you know don't do that how have you been able to go into the round the field areas yet i i was um senator i was um only appointed for st croix okay so we don't have nobody but just that i was over here and we haven't had somebody for over here see the problem with having somebody over here it's not that my boss didn't try to hire somebody he had somebody in mind the problem with saint thomas's round the field savannah ghettos i was outside in those streets they are very very very different they don't like each other for some reason man from bovine he gonna tell you i ain't

3:37:01 going in savannah or i ain't going in ghettos and the problem with that is you can't hire one individual to represent the whole island of saint thomas because he ain't gonna be able to go if he from over here he can't go over there and that's the problem that he may have been finding somebody that's able to go in all these hoods see i was able to do that in st croix because i from there and i am part of that i was there i lived that life so it was accepted when i came in but you can't find that here it's hard so what is your solution for that and the person that i was looking at um turns out they were still in the game oh so i have to be careful wow because i have to maintain the integrity of the program exactly he's a great guy and he can go all over but then i got to worry about him still got one foot in and one foot out and then so i you know he might be using the shadow of your office yeah so i you know this is a this is a tricky walk you know and so i have to protect the integrity program protect the agency i definitely understand that um one of the things for me do you guys collect data when it relates to the different types of guns like i know the police department speaks about these spot shotters that they have have you guys utilized those to know the types of weapons based on the sound to know what you're really dealing with in this territory we haven't focused from from my office perspective we haven't focused on that too much because that's and we could but um that's that's more of a police investigative tool than it is for our office no i mean you collaborating so yeah i mean they could they could tell us two minutes because we used to get the information we go to the scenes i mean you can tell that there's there's 40 cows there's 50 cow there's there's nine millimeter you know brass all over the place you know so we can we can tell there's different and just by the shells just by the the casings yeah yeah and sometimes like i live in i live in saint croix and i live around the corner from

3:39:11 kennedy and harbor view and sometimes in the middle of the night man i live in a cement house that bad would be rocking and my my pictures are shaking on the wall because it's so it sounds so close when they're using that really heavy artillery where you are right now and as it relates to what your goal is which is prevention of gun violence where do you think after you potentially get all the employees you need the people from the various to go into the various areas what is your ultimate goal to do with this office that is going to be effective in helping this community well the ultimate goal is to is to increase the quality of life in our territory and that just means that we can go anywhere on this island and feel safe you know i i gave a you know when the kids got shot at with the bb guns at wood at woodson you know i was heartbroken because now those kids can't go outside we've corralled them inside the courtyard and they can't play in the front that that's not working you know that's changing quality of life but that's but so i want to be able to say you know and and mr lang says a lot of times time we want to be able to west man need to be able to go east you know east man need to go west without a fear of somebody shooting them down you know and i people don't come out they don't they don't come out at night because they're fearful somebody's going to do something to them that that's a that's an economy issue there's there's people that won't go on go into town because they're afraid somebody they shot sometimes i don't go out because the last thing i want to do is be sitting in a bar and somebody is trying to shoot billy next to me and hits me by accident i'm gonna be pissed mr chairman i asked my final question thank you um you spoke about high-risk young adults how do you go about outside of going into the community those specific people that are high risk

3:41:24 how do you go about specifically tapping into them and seeing how you could assist them we have conversations with them um we go into to the church like for instance the other day i went I went into Frederic State and there's a guy who washes cars that's his hustle you know so I go talk to him and say hey watch my car and we'll talk you know and I talk to him and then he introduces me to other guys that that are with him and they say they first thing they say man who you driving this big government car who are you who you be you know so they start asking me questions and so I disarm them because you know I'm kind of corny and you know I'm not I'm not of I'm not they don't they're not afraid of me but they know I'm no threat to them you're asking about safety and somebody asked about being safe I I don't I don't bring to them an abrasive approach so then after a while they start asking me first they trying to they kind of joke me a little bit but I let them get away with and we talk and then we have conversations and then they start asking me questions about what I do what what mr. Lang does what Bruce does and we and we start having conversations and then I go back to them again and then we start we build a rapport okay and that's how we try to get into these neighborhoods and then i say hey what are you doing does the first thing you say well wait a minute you give him a job for stopping people from from fighting i do that all the time i said well you can help out man we can try to get you something what do you want to do but here's what happened senator we've gone guy says man i need a job i want a job it's okay well we'll give you a job we'll find a job damon bruce know people all over these islands yeah bring your boy i'll hire so we knock on the door hey come on it's nine o'clock in the morning let's go down down down the road we're gonna get you this job oh man really i ain't trying to do that right now you know so so we get we get we have a lot of that hurdle going on too people that don't want to and we got people that don't want to give up their their government benefits wow you You know, we say, hey, we can give you a job. You know, it means I got to give up my stat. I got to give up my, because the money I'm making isn't going to be equal to my benefits.

- 3:43:29 So that's a whole nother systemic issue that we have to deal with. And that's why we're working with human services to see if we can sort of balance it out somehow. But some of those things are restricted by federal guidelines that we don't have any control over. Okay. Well, thank you so much for all that information, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you for the additional time. I'm sorry, I'm a little passionate. Thank you. I enjoy it. Senator Francis Eiliger. Before I recognize Senator Javon James, Sr., Director Emanuel, your full office staff is just made up of the three of you?
- 3:44:05 For right now, yes, sir. For now. So you're required to, what's the status on hiring district directors, the analysts who will specialize in statistical data collection, because I heard you respond to my colleague just now swiftly that you guys can't do the analysis of firearms, but you don't. But how can you if you haven't hired the analysts for this position? Well, that comes into play with our partnership with VIPD and other agencies that have the ability to do analytic work. We are looking at analysts, looking at hiring it, but right now we're gonna go with what we have. As far as your director's question, having six employees, I don't think I need a deputy director. So let me stop you. So then you're telling me that you're dependent on the VIPD for this. Not for everything, not for everything. Let me finish, ask you the question, and then you respond.
- 3:45:14 Okay. Because it was your testimony just now that you're dependent on the VIPD for this statistical data with their employees, and now you're telling me that you don't need district directors and whatnot. Now, if this law was written in this manner, then it is you guys' responsibility to submit, I guess, to the governor, and then eventually to us to amend this if these positions aren't required.
- 3:45:45 We just had a discussion about our legislations stating may or shall. In this case, it doesn't say that you may hire these people. It said that you shall hire these people. So if you're going to say that there is no need, then we need to see some type of amendment request coming in here that there is not a need for this position and whatever else it is that your needs are. But I wouldn't want to sit here and tell you that I will be comfy in doing additional funding to an entity where I don't see exactly what it was created to do. Straight up, I will remind people that I really didn't support the establishment of this office because I really believe that it's a duplication of efforts. And here it is. Now we're saying that we will depend on VIPD for these statistical data.
- 3:46:53 That's why this office was created. So I would like to see some movements on at least hiring the analysts who specialize in the statistical data collection. I'm not going to even list all these other individuals, but I applaud the efforts of the three-man team and what's happening in both districts. However, we could see that you would need a violence interrupter in the St. Thomas, St. John district as well. We're hearing why you're probably having a hard time getting one here. And we would need a community engagement outreach specialist as well in the St. Croix district.
- 3:47:43 So these, because Flamon can't operate here and there, and Lang can't operate there and here as well. We're going to spread these guys too thin. So if we really want this to work, then we got to put our minds together to make it work. While I didn't support the measure to pass, it is law, the office is in existence, and I would like to support wherever I can. But I want to do so knowing that we are fully accountable to what's stated here, and if it's not working for you, then submit any potential changes that you'd like to see. All right? Appreciate that.
- 3:48:29 uh senator javan james you recognize for your six minutes greetings to the people of the u.s virgin islands thank you testifiers for being here during the 33rd legislature of the virgin islands as a freshman senator i fought this bill right down to the ground and senator myron jackson and myself went at it because to my a person who understands the street i do understand down the street. I do not have all the answers, but I felt that we were just wasting money. Until one day, I was invited to Senator Marion Jackson's residence, and we had a conversation.
- 3:49:18 And he told me how he felt about my comments on the floor regarding this office that we were trying to implement. And right before Senator Jackson was about to leave the 33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands, he brought back the measure and I had a change of heart. What makes me smile today is Mr. Damian Lang being before us in these chambers. And it may not seem like a big thing for other individuals in the community, but Mr. Damian Lang was once my neighbor, Concadia.
- 3:49:55 And I'm happy to see individuals being given a second chance. Because sometimes we come with a jacket and the ties, and they don't want to really hear from the jacket and tie guy, you know? But they would like to hear from a Damian Lang, who went through certain obstacles and now is in a jacket and tie. And I, too, if you ask my former principal, it wasn't easy and complex. But that's a whole other thing. But I was fortunate enough to turn my life around. And that's what made me change my mind when it came to supporting the measure. I sat down, I said, Javan, put your selfish ideas or whatever aside, and think about how many lives can be saved if this office is being put together. So my question to you now, within the Virgin Islands Code, it says by August 31st, you must do an annual report. I look forward to that annual report. Please come with something that is well detailed.

- 3:50:56 In addition to that, it speaks to a pretrial intervention programs and reentry programs. Earlier today, we heard from the Office of the Public Defender, and we saw where they broke down the different cases and they had the section with juveniles. So my question to you regarding pretrial intervention programs and reentry programs, what being done with a three-man team to make sure that you fulfill the mandate of the Virgin Islands Code to assist with pre-trial intervention programs and re-entry programs that can help our youth and young men and women of this territory. The Office of the Public Defender is also on our advisory council. We work close with him and we have the re-entry team. We are on the re-entry program as well. So we do those programs. We assist as close as we can.
- 3:51:47 we we could certainly do more so it's on our on our radar so do these programs require funding and and do you have a specific name like the program of like like for instance we have the about face program that was sponsored by I think Senator Veily at one point but do you have like a specific name of various programs that you have already put together finalized drafted and ready to be implemented or is it still going through the beginning stages of putting the program together those are programs that that corrections and probation has already started i i don't have a name for them directly but like we call it the where the re-entry we have two re-entry housing and the re-entry focus group is how we've been dealing with the re-entry issue all right and two minutes so have you been successful at assisting and intervening in anything regarding pre-trial for any of our juveniles in the territory since this office has been implemented yes or no we haven't done anything with with pre-trial juveniles and the reason for nothing came before you nothing came before us so how often do you speak or meet with the office of the public defender not as often as we should that needs to happen because we have individuals colleagues who cannot afford an attorney we have individuals because of the financial situation in the household they may need a public defender and we want to make sure that with the taxpayers dollars who funds those offices specifically the office of the public defender that there is collaboration between the office of gun violence and the office of the public defender because we are speaking about individuals who do not have a that the financial resources when you read a person writes they say if you cannot afford attorney one will be appointed to you something of that nature and that's the office of the public defenders we are speaking about individuals who are basically in poverty who don't have the financial means and with there must be some strong collaboration between the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and that of the Office of Public Defender. If not, I will bring legislation. And whether my colleagues support it or not,
- 3:54:11 I will bring legislation to remove the Office of Gun Violence. Because we cannot continue to wait until they become adults to try to save them. That's not prevention. When they say prevention is better than cure, you're starting from a very young age. You have a guy like Mr. Damien Lang or whoever can see. okay I can read this young man how can we intervene and if you can't intervene at least we have tried and not just try by a simple conversation they really have a one-on-one conversation to find out what is going on with this youth let me give an example before my time is called when I was attending the same educational complex I had good grades but had a behavioral issue because of one of my parents went through and it changed the structure within the household. Mr. Chair, if I can just wrap up. I was in the counselor's office and my mom was during a parental conference and my mom asked the counselor, what can be done to help my son?
- 3:55:16 He crazy, he needed to see a psychologist. But guess what? I never once saw a psychologist, but because of the after school programs and the many things that they had going on back in those days i was able to turn my life around and i'm hoping i'm praying that the office of gun violence can do that if not we are wasting funds colleagues thank you mr chair for the time thank you uh senate uh james center senior um you uh chair would like to say something say that Yes, to Mr. James, Senator James. I was recently contacted, it was maybe a month and a half ago, about our YRC. Do you understand that some of our YRC officers ain't had a job because ain't had no children there? Completely empty? And they call me and tell me, man, what dealing with you need to call it down you're going to pass out a walk because they weren't arresting no little man no more or no girls no but i'm saying this was just a recent conversation so i felt good about that you know but we do target them young men that's our main focus Thank you.
- 3:56:46 Mr. Flemmand, you may. Yes, good evening, Senator James. I just wanted to take a brief second and let you know and the body know and the community, they already know. Our outreach has been phenomenal. outreach programs with we went in a car show a simple car show was attended maybe four or five hundred youth and that next day just to show you we were in the right place we had a homicide of one of the drivers and they all came together they call a couple of them called me and they they thanked us for giving them an opportunity to help with the car show because for these youth to put on their different events, it costs so much money that they can't do it. And they're calling us to help us with this, help us with that insurance. And our whole purpose now with this radio show that's going to start this Saturday, entrepreneurs. we have young entrepreneurs that are learning to start their own businesses and now they're going to have a voice that they didn't have before when they want to talk about what they're doing they have to pay to get on the radio but this show is going to be all about entrepreneurs and we are going to make a difference we have made a difference that's why i'm so

happy with my position because i can see we have made a difference entrepreneurship mentorship and apprenticeship is the way that we're going to change our gun violence not through lock-up

3:58:37 we have to give these children something to do we have to put the money where our mouths are uh point of inquiry uh senator james senior thank you mr chair quick point of inquiry I salute you, and I'm happy that Mr. Damien Lang is amongst the team. But my question was specifically to pre-trial intervention programs and re-entry programs. So I salute you for all the great things that you're doing. Hoop-dee-doo. But once a child ends up in the court system, that's a whole nother conversation. And I'm hoping and praying that the person who told you that, Mr. Lang, do find another job. So long story short, re-entry programs and pre-trial intervention programs is what I'm specifically looking at. And those are individuals that no matter what we try to do as far as legislation, they've already been lost and stuck in the system. So thank you. Thank you. Director and colleagues, so besides the analysts that I asked about earlier and the district directors. It also speaks to the survivor engagement specialist, which means a person who engages with families who have lost a loved one due to gun violence. Develops and implements survivor engagement and outreach efforts, coordinates survivor projects, events, and activities, and coordinates legislative initiatives to empower survivors.

4:00:21 How long have this office been in existence now? Since March, March 22. A year. And we are 11 and a half weeks into the new year, into the calendar year, with nine homicides. Two on St. Croix, seven on St. Thomas. So, who is engaging with the families who have lost loved ones to gun violence?

4:00:59 I don't have anybody in position yet, but when I... So, hence my point. One year later. So I'm not even considering the other homicides that would have happened from March 2022 to December 31st, 2022. I am specifically speaking to those, and not that those families don't matter. I'm just showing 11 and a half weeks. We have to show some kind of priority.

4:01:40 We have to show that sense of urgency. I really don't want to speak much on this because, listen, something like this, I want to see action taking place. What I see right now, I mean, I'm just at the last. Things that we could be doing to reduce crime, and this isn't your office per se, but things to prevent crimes from happening. Simple traffic stops prevents crimes.

4:02:27 An officer driving behind someone that don't have a license plate that didn't turn on the signal to make a left turn, that ran through the red light, you never know when you stop that vehicle. You never know what you just prevented from happening. The nine shootings that we had, to your recollection, because you don't have data to show me, were any of those shootings done by a perpetrator walking or riding a bicycle?

4:03:07 No. Most of them, you hear about vehicles being involved and people driving up, people leaving. Besides the last one with that foolishness with this, who looking at who and whatnot. But I'm saying, we can prevent things from happening. There is just too much vehicles right now on our roadways, unregistered. Over some \$1.3 million this government have lost in registration of vehicle in one calendar year.

4:03:50 and i got that out of them yesterday at the revenue estimating conference and i'm glad that they were honest about it so that tells me that there is a lack of enforcement i don't really like to compare uh my days with this these days and all kind of things but But the traffic docket, I already said it's going to take a couple of days to go and sit in a traffic court to really look and see what's going on with the traffic docket. I could remember back in the day when the judges were actually calling the police chief office and asking them to ask us to hold up and write in tickets. The docket is just a little too much. then they came out with a directive that you couldn't write tickets for two weeks or three weeks out you had to write the ticket for like two months out because they wanted to play catch up and now today is like it's a free for all and I'm just elaborating on this because I really think that we could do things to reduce crime here and we just ain't doing the basics It is what it is. I will continue to watch this, but I heard the good senator from St. Croix.

4:05:14 I want to give this an opportunity, but I'm telling you, if I continue to see us spinning wheels, I'm right there with him to support the measure to abolish the office. But we need for things to be happening. if we can't find all these people at this thing outline to to be able to make sure that the office work effectively then we have to make some adjustments so that we could get exactly what we want but this analyst is critical data we need to be data driven so that we can know how to proceed So I'm going to give you some time. Hopefully I could hear some PSAs and see some stuff out because I haven't seen anything out with you asking for persons interested in any of these positions.

4:06:10 So at least the analyst position, that's critical. And the person that's the survivor engagement specialist. We have nine families that don't even have that engagement. you know how i feel when i could hear families saying you know my son was murdered my daughter was murdered and i haven't heard a thing from anyone in authority and it's been x amount of time etc that's a no-no yeah we've been working close with the vipd's victims assist assistance person both here on St. Croix and St. Thomas. But we're learning from her how to go about that process, how to get better at doing the engagement with the survivors. So it's a learning curve, but I agree with you. We need to get those positions filled, and

we're doing our best to do it. And like I said, I want to make sure that we get the right person for the job. I just don't want to fill a seat to be filling it.

4:07:13 So let's try to work. The fact that you don't have that person right now, Right now, let's try to make sure that you work with both advocates in either district. And I know both of them personally, whom I've had an opportunity to work with. They're dynamic. They're always ready to be out there. But there's also supposed to be one with the Department of Justice, I think it is. So tap into all these resources. Make it work until you can get properly staffed up and get things moving. All right?

4:07:50 Any other questions, colleagues? If not, I will allow them to just wrap up in 30 seconds, starting with Mr. Fleming. OK, well, I'd like to thank everybody for tonight. And thank you, senators. And I just want to commend my boss. I think he's done an outstanding job. I'm proud to work for him. And it's been astounding for what we've done.

4:08:26 I've been in my position for about five months now. And I see a difference when we go into the schools. I see a difference. I'm really looking for a lot of feedback from our radio show that's going to start this Saturday. And I'm just proud of my team. And I think these positions that need to be filled, they'll be filled. But I know for sure, for sure, the relationship with the community and VIPD, we have a different relationship. When we walk in, when we go to the schools, we went to the school the everyday Lockhart School, the principal gave us two play handguns. They look identical to real guns. And so the principals of these schools are inviting us back. I don't know if they're inviting all these other agencies, but I know when we walk in, they have a personal relationship with me, and they love when Mr. Emmanuel talks to the children. He has a neck when he talks to these children, and I'm so proud to be a part of this team. So give us some time. I know if you give him some time, I know he's looking at some clergy to fill these positions, but just give him just a little more time, And I know when we come back, we're going to have some data to help convince you and our good senator over here, Senator James, to fund more money into the program because that's what we need.

4:09:57 We need more money. I'm glad that you're convinced because I'm not. And until then, like I said, I mean, we're not seeing anything with the statistical data and whatnot. We're already talking about more money. we can't hire anything besides the two positions so I don't understand how you could justify asking for more money already but Mr. Lang I'll allow you to give your closing remarks thank you thank you people have a wonderful day thank you we appreciate you giving us opportunity to come before you chairman and senators we need all the assistance and help we can get and I intend to rely on the legislature for that I agree with you wholeheartedly that maybe some of the the way the I inherited this legislation that was written before I took the job needs to be looked at again and reviewed I agree that wholeheartedly so um that's certainly on the on a burner for that appreciate your time thank you and i appreciate your your uh testimony and your candid uh feedback from you and your team today uh yes there's room for improvement and i i am willing to give uh the time to to get that done however again we have grieving families and all they want to know is that we're able to prevent a lot of these gun violence that we're seeing we know it your office alone can't do it it's gonna take the community to to really do it and I always say if we want to take back the streets we need to regain control of our homes because that's where it starts so thank you all

4:11:56 again for all you do and whatever assistance besides the additional funding for just yet whatever assistance we could be I'm definitely there with you so thank you the Committee on Homeland Security Justice on Public Safety. Let me first thank everyone, all the testifiers, all the employees who have been here for morning. It's now 7.22 in the evening. I want to say a special thank you to all the employees, the hardworking employees of the legislature that is, for all your assistance.

4:12:42 The Committee on Homeland Security and my staff, that includes you as well. I'm not leaving you all out. The Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety for Wednesday, March 15, 2023 is hereby adjourned. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you.

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.

10x **Senator Marise C. James**

the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, James Sr

8x	Senator Dwayne DeGraff heard in this transcript as: De Graff, DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff
7x	Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger heard in this transcript as: Alma-Francis Heiliger, Francis Eiliger, Francis Heiliger
6x	Senator Franklin D. Johnson heard in this transcript as: Franklin Johnson, Johnson
6x	Senator Fred Gregory the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
6x	Senator Ray Fonseca heard in this transcript as: Fonseca
6x	Senator Samuel Carrion heard in this transcript as: Carrion, Carrione
5x	Senator Kenneth L. Gittens heard in this transcript as: Gittins, Kenneth Gittens, Kenneth L. Gittins
4x	Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr. heard in this transcript as: Angel L. Bolques Jr., Angel L. Boquez Jr, Bolquez, Boquez
4x	Senator Novelle Francis heard in this transcript as: Francis, Francis Jr
3x	Senator Javan James heard in this transcript as: Javon E. James Sr., Javon James Sr.
2x	Senator Angel L. Bolkis Jr heard in this transcript as: Bolkis Jr
2x	Senator Francis Heidegger heard in this transcript as: Frances Heidegger
2x	Senator Giovanni James Sr the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Marise C. James; Neville James
2x	Senator James Senior
2x	Senator Myron Jackson heard in this transcript as: Jackson
2x	Commissioner Ray Martinez
2x	Senator Samuel Carillon heard in this transcript as: Carillon

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.

Bill 35-0013	Act 8790 · December 19, 2023 · An Act amending title 20 Virgin Islands Code, part II, chapter 35, relating to the issuance of limited local-purpose identification cards and operators- licenses aea(Jace
Act 8423	Act 8423 · January 2021 · An Act amending title 3, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new section 27i establishing the Virgin Islands Office of Gun Violence Prevention under the Office of the Governor
Act 8790	Act 8790 · December 19, 2023 · An Act amending title 20 Virgin Islands Code, part II, chapter 35, relating to the issuance of limited local-purpose identification cards and operators- licenses aea(Jace