

Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance Part 2

Legislature USVI

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0:00:00 We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you.

0:02:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. The committee is back on the record.

0:36:53 and when we left the question was with regards to the wheels and meals program meals and wheels program and the reason for the long waiting lists and how can we adjust that then I Baptiste assistant commissioner so in terms of our wait list we do have 150 you have to speak into the mic we have 150 on a wait list for st croix 130 on the wait list for st thomas as we are coming off of covid one of the things that we experienced was an increased census on the program during covid since then it was only supposed to be a temporary increase of course as a response to the pandemic however we have not wanted to remove those folks from being on the program so we just we're experiencing a situation where the number of courses continuing to increase and we're having to find the additional resources to address it we are looking to a higher additional nutritional aids but for every nutritional aid that we add so that we can increase the program we also have to buy a vehicle and we also have to hire a driver so there's a lot of things it comes as a package so it's just an exorbitant amount of cost that we need in order to increase it so we've anticipated that we need two additional meal runs on each island and we do have the vacancies for those and we are looking at the quotes to purchase the vehicles as well as

to identify drivers so Commissioner what is the

- 0:38:52 the discussion that you're having because we know that we have ARPA money that's still available so we're having actually some meetings this week with the governor to discuss that specifically and then a couple of other how long this will it's been 150 people great well no I was just gonna say that this is the list as of June and we've We've just been seeing an increase, you know, week after week and month after month. And we're talking about people who are what age? Sorry, can you repeat the question?
- 0:39:31 We're talking about people who are what age? So these are seniors, so age 60 and above is generally the population. We may have some additional folks that due to their circumstances, they require the service as well, but it's mostly for our senior population. Are you ready to respond? So this wait list is 150 people territory wide? No, that is for the island of St. Croix. So we're looking at about 280. So we have 200, how much is it? 280.
- 0:40:13 So we have like 130 in St. Thomas and 150 in St. Croix that has, that are seniors that has asked or applied to be on the Wheels and Meals program. Is there an income requirement? I'll just double check. No, there is no income requirement. So we don't get up out of our bed every day, pour our foot on the ground. You have island vacancies, Commissioner, that you have not been able to fill in this fiscal year, and I didn't ask for appropriation transfer.
- 0:40:51 We did actually apply for appropriation. What is the cost to do this? So our nutritional aids make about \$35,000. No, what's the overall cost? The total cost would be about \$76,000 a year plus the cost of a vehicle. That's not what I'm asking. If this is a challenge that we are experiencing in the Department of Human Services, somebody should have what is the overall, if you were to be asked today, what's the overall cost to support this additional act, what is that number? That is information that should be part of your discussions.
- 0:41:31 Y'all having a meeting with the governor and you still don't have the information, so what meeting are you having? When we have all of that ARPA money floating around and you don't have that cost, then you didn't really see it as a priority. That should have been something that you said to the governor, hey, look, I have a challenge here. How can y'all assist me with funding this? do not know what to say this is do you understand like i i just have to beg the question do we understand what is the role of the department of human services the department of social services do we understand what a rule is yes why are we leaving all our people i'm already like suffering later The increase in the number of services for every program has increased. Every single program, except the foster care numbers have gone down, I think the reporting for child abuse.
- 0:42:39 Commissioner, do you like to answer what you want or not with me? No, I'm not answering what- The question is, I'm speaking specifically to the wheels and meals, whatever the program, Wheels and Meals program. I ain't asking about childcare services. We are having a specific point of discussion. Yes, it's important to us. Yeah, but what are we doing about it? How long has it been going on? What's the timeline to begin to truly address this? I don't know what to say. I need to hear from the person that raised the hand and say I got this.
- 0:43:26 The cost for the Meals on Wheels program is about \$250,000 if we were to increase all the meals. For us, that's the cost. Territory-wide? Territory-wide. Territory-wide. This is a territorial discussion? Yes. We're having a \$250,000 conversation in the grand scheme of things. I don't see nothing wrong with that. Okay. Colleagues, we're going to do, we have to go on to the next department and it's 108. So there's two other departments or three other departments that's coming on here. We're going to do a burning question. I'm going to allow each senator to ask one burning question. Please respect the time, because we have other departments that have to come before us this afternoon. There's so many other questions that's budget-related that I have to get to.
- 0:44:27 So let's try our best to see if we could get back to the, you know, just ask if we have a question. Yeah, I need to, I just, at a loss for all of this. I am. I did. I just am. May I clarify one thing for the Meals and Whales? You can. So the \$250 is actually just the operational cost. The actual meal cost is going to be \$1.1 million. So like your plates for food, the contractual part of it.
- 0:44:58 I don't need to know all of that. So it's \$1.3 million. Yes. And you've never had a conversation with regards, how much ARPA money did you receive that came out directly from the GVA? I'll have to check, I'll have to double check. Did you ever have had a discussion with the Governor regarding this challenge? We can't have our people hungry. We had a few, actually, ARPA requests that went through but didn't get approved.
- 0:45:36 I'm not sure if Males on Wheels was one of them. Have you scrubbed your overall resources? You have 100 and, what are your appropriation transfer requests that you're bringing on to the legislature is? You have an appropriation transfer request for \$4.9 million. For what purpose? Primarily to move monies for contractual needs for medical, sorry, for the claims for medical assistance and some of the contractual needs. We did put some supplies and other services as the build-out for the Sunny Isle location needs to happen. Well, our people are hungry.

- 0:46:17 We need to relook at that because Senator James said it well. You can tell the value of a community based on how they treat the elderly population. This is not a make-up story. This is very real. I don't know how we could put our feet on the ground every day and know that we have people who have applied and we have a waiting list of people who are the most vulnerable among us who don't necessarily. We are their voice.
- 0:46:51 We are their voice. So we have to do what we have to do. Have you looked and scrubbed your numbers to make a determination as to how you could assist with this program? Lydia McGrath, CFO, initially, I think back in 21 or 22, \$1.2 million was received for Meals and Wheels, and that's when a lot of people were added to the program. So I think that it needs to be scrubbed and put on, I think the way it's working, and Danelle, you can chime in, that the most vulnerable right now are what are being added to the program. All right, colleagues, we're going to go to one burning question and then we're going to wrap up because I have to get back to the numbers, so at some point I have to do that. So Senator Bulquez, and let's stick to it, one burning question, please.
- 0:47:47 You're recognized for your burning question. the public health emergency unwind how will the department identify and support the individuals who will no longer be eligible for the benefits after the unwind process what alternatives or assistance programs are available to mitigate the impact of losing such coverage Danelle Baptiste, assistant commissioner.
- 0:48:18 So like I mentioned, anyone who will lose their benefits who is a government employee would then have the opportunity to move on to the government insurance. We are also directing other individuals to the individual insurance program. we do know that this does come with additional costs but the reason that they are losing eligibility is because of a change in circumstances so they are no longer meeting the income limit so they have either received employment where they did it not have before or have received increased wages so those are the two alternatives that we do have in place currently and unfortunately that you know there's not much more that we could do beyond that Thank you for your response, Senator Blayden, you're recognized for your burning question.
- 0:49:21 Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Of course, when it comes to the Department of Human Services, it deals with protecting our seniors, especially when it comes to abuse. So my question is, in terms of adult protective program, what's your caseload? Do you have any caseload, and how much do you have pending? We do have a caseload information. Just one second. For APS in the St. Thomas, St. John District, we have 307, and in St. Croix, 347.
- 0:50:00 307 347 we have a problem oh how many staff do you have to work on these cases so in each case we have one social worker in each district as well as the supervisors who are also social workers so technically two in each district that's supplemented also by family service specialists that assist with those kids do you think those numbers are adequate to adjust those services that's needed oh no we know they're not adequate and we are actively trying to hire qualified as certified social workers thank you so much Senator DeGraff stepped out of the room.
- 0:51:01 Senator James, your burning question. Greetings to the people of the U.S. for the Netherlands. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time. As far as my burning question, as far as the social workers, you know every year I ask about the social workers say somebody could us give me a status update on how many social workers we have any vacancies and the improvements there when it comes to catering to our children and family and the Virgin Islands and good afternoon assistant commissioner Carla Benjamin currently we have 13 social workers on board we have five social work vacancies we have We have 10 Family Services Specialists on board and five Family Services Specialist Vacancies as well. And with the indulgence, Madam Chair, if I could just get the breakdown by district when it comes to the five vacancies for social workers. Sure, for the social workers, there are 13 social workers that are on board. Six are on St. Thomas, St. John's, seven are on St. Croix and with the vacancies. those vacancies are st thomas st john and one is st croix thank you madam chair you go ahead this the successes uh with the social workers that was another part of the question so i asked about the social workers the vacancies the britain on the district and the successes of the social workers in the past year or two and that's it um the successes well uh some of Some of the social workers that were in the count last year have since been promoted into district manager's positions because, as was mentioned, the supervisors are also social
- 0:52:56 workers because social workers can be supervised by other than licensed social workers. We onboarded a social worker on the island of St. John, which is the first time in a number of years um and the vacancies that i mentioned about four of the five vacancies i would say are are positions that have um been funded for the first time in a number of years because of additional social services block grant dollars that we got yeah thank you senator james uh senator johnson thank you very much madam chair I'm a non-committee member but for the time I come in here this agency is the worst and my question is very simple how can you sleep at night how can you possibly sleep at night knowing that our elders our seniors are not getting the service that they deserve. How can you sleep at night? Somebody please explain it to me. If you're comfortable with the job that you're delivering service to our people, anybody can answer it. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

- 0:54:17 I don't sleep. I truly don't. All of us up here and all of our staff, we don't sleep. We work 24-7, so do I. I don't sleep, to answer your question. Well, you know, Commissioner, when people don't sleep they don't function well. You've got to get sleep in order to function because that could be part of the issue. You have to sleep. Let me just go back quickly to these budget numbers before I go to Senator Carrion.
- 0:55:08 Your other services and charges category for the FY24 asks has been increased by \$3 million. Is McGrath that accurate? Good afternoon, Lydia McGrath, CFO. Yes. Okay, what does that \$3 million entail? Pretty much an increase for the residential services contract. And AC Benjamin can give some details on it, specific to one contract. Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin. We had a facility notify us that they were closing down. And so we had to transfer 19 of our most medically fragile and elderly residents who were in care from that facility to another facility. And the facility that they've moved to, that is what represents the increase. It costs more for their care.
- 0:56:14 So the medical services contract in FY 2024 will be increased by some \$3 million? And currently your Meals and Wheels program is funded how? Lydia McGrath, CFO, it's funded through the Consolidated Social Services Block Grant.
- 0:56:48 And what's the amount? Let me circle back with you, I have to pull the grant up because it's just recently. And don't forget, before we leave, when we open a meeting, we ask about those grants that the total amount of those grants that you were losing as a result of this cost allocation allocation. What was it? Costs?
- 0:57:17 Allocation plan. Allocation issue. So we still need to get a number. So you don't know the amount of the Meals and Wheels program? Grant? The Meals and Wheels runs about \$2.5 million a year for all of the vendors. So let me ask you, another \$2.5 million, it's inclusive of drivers and is the straight meals?
- 0:57:50 Yes. Straight meals. And you don't receive any federal, local dollars for that purpose? Yes. We are hiring additional drivers and nutrition aides. So the personnel is on the local funds? No. Well, we have some personnel on the local fund, but we have on the federal also. Do you have any exempt employees on this Meals and Wheels program?
- 0:58:24 My knowledge, no. Okay. Commissioner, you need to ask the governor to provide you with additional resources from the ARPA money for this program. There's no excuse. And then we will figure out how we could assist with funding it. But those funds, I think, expire in 2025.
- 0:58:55 So that's the reason for that increase. And then you have \$374,000 for capital projects. What is that capital projects? Air conditioners and copier machines. projects is not copying machines. And he purchased over \$5,000 as quantified as capital.
- 0:59:28 Why are you purchasing copying machines in this day and age? You should be leasing them. Because when you purchase them, they become yours and then you have these big old things sitting on your arm. Why are you purchasing copying machines? People don't purchase copying machines when you're going to lease them. We will explore the options. I think we've had some really bad experiences with the leasing. You do lease purchases. You do lease. So when it's time you you you upgrade them and you give them back their own machine again new one if you buy them right out they sit in the counter when they walk in okay I'm gonna go to the next senator until I could regroup on this Senator Carrion you're recognized for your burning question thank you uh commissioner regards to ecap you know my concerns with that program specifically the payment process and late fees that are being applied to um your clients uh those that are part of the program um what is the internal plan to ratify this issue that is causing hardship on our seniors and those that fall within that category sometimes you like they're being cut or they have to pay late fees and this should be corrected and what conversation do you have with WAPA in regards to this? Actually, our MOU just got executed for part of that, so I think that'll be helpful as far as payment is concerned. But I don't know if there was any additional stuff that you wanted to say. So I am not aware of any conversations with WAPA in particular. However, we have refocused our monitoring efforts internally just to look at the process and make sure that everything is being done efficiently well the late fees fall under these individuals that are coming to your office because they need the support and the financial assistance and now they have to end up paying these late fees so that needs to be really rectified they can continue in that process and payments need to be processed on time
- 1:01:38 yeah and i think that you know between wapa and ourselves we'll be able to work through because they shouldn't be charged agreed thank you it's every other month we don't um just we pay every other month we don't usually pay every month so there may be a time when they didn't pay their bill but we paid ours so it's everyone's a little bit of an individual so we'll double we'll do a deeper dive to see what that looks like and see how we can make sure that there's no late fees was that total on ecap it's what ah i have to double check the ecap lydia mcgras cfo we get \$500,000 from the general fund and we get about \$700,000 to \$800,000 from block grant.

- 1:02:14 Thank you Madam Chair. Senator Joseph, your burning question. Yes, thank you so much Madam Chair. I still have concerns regarding the number of nurses. I went through your listing, and I counted about five vacant positions. Commissioner, and these nurses are for our elderly population.
- 1:02:50 Commissioner, what is your plan? What is your plan? Because you got rid of the Crawford nurses. What is the plan of action to build up the amount of nurses amount of nurses that we have for our elderly population, serving our elderly population? Because we only have one RN on board based on your representation. What is your plan of action? I wanted to clarify just the statement regarding getting rid of Pafford. Pafford actually was a contract under the Department of Health and we had the added benefit of utilizing a few of the positions under that and that was paid for by them. And we actually hired three LPNs that we were utilizing under the Patford contract for that.
- 1:03:36 So that was just that first part regarding Patford. And then the secondary question is for nurses is, I'm sorry. So one of the things that we're looking to do is offer incentive programs where we're encouraging folks in the community as well as our staff to go ahead and get those additional training that's needed and then look to have them be hired for a certain period of time as a repayment to that, as well as incentives to be able to do so. So we're trying to identify a funding source, but we are trying to come up with creative methods for building that workforce.
- 1:04:15 I really think that you have to look at perhaps even revisiting, getting some contractual nurses on board in the interim, because you can't just have one nurse, registered nurse serving a whole population of elderly on both Island District. Thank you so much Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Joseph. I wanna commend you, Ms. Baptiste, Ms. Dinelle, for coming into the department and really being able to respond to some of these questions but I have to say you're doing your part because that's the piece that you're responsible for but collectively the government of the Virgin Islands we can't do it in here must look at the challenge that we have with nurses and all of the entities that are responsible for hiring nurses need to come to the table, create that think tank, and move forward, we compete against ourselves.
- 1:05:28 So you're doing your part, you're talking about incentives. So what will happen? When you provide the incentive, they're gonna come in droves, and the other one will have the problem what we're having right now. This don't make no sense. There's this saying that came from the tutty-tot, leaders must lead. And we are not hearing that in this discussion. And of course, Commissioner, If it's something that is near and dear to you, then perhaps you need to start the conversation. But we gotta be trailblazers in our work. People gotta know that we're here, and when we're gone, they have to know that we were here.
- 1:06:08 That's how it works. I don't know what else to say. I mean, it sounds good, and you're doing your part, Ms. Baptiste, but it's not enough because it's going to create an issue a delta in another area and this is this is this is something that's permeating throughout government it's just not your agency or your needs rather that's more like it it's just not your needs it's just overall we've seen a challenge uh i want to apologize to senator fonseca and senator francis uh senator franceca you're recognized for your burning question and incident of francis yes uh thank you very much madam chair um you know um commissioner gomez the the results always tell the truth so i want to ask you right because i'm the chair of the committee of health hospitals and human services i have not been able to get you before the committee and what we are seeing here shows that the human services department needed to be reviewed and scrutinized before we get to the budget committee and please don't talk about being overworked because i'm going to tell you something the senators work hard but the chairwoman of this committee if you've seen the job and the hours and the time and the effort she's put in the last few weeks i they ain't nobody in the government of the vi been working harder than the chairwoman of this committee so let's not talk about that so i want to ask you commissioner can you come before the Committee on Health Hospitals and Human Services on September the 6th, 2023. Thank you, Madam Chair.
- 1:08:27 The question is not of me. The question... Did you ask a question, Senator? yes i wanted to i asked the commissioner of human services the honorable cosi gomez if she will be available on september the 6th 2023 at 10 a.m in the fritz loretz legislative hall to appear before the committee on health hospitals and human services thank you for the question as indicated in the email that you sent in my response, I said yes.
- 1:09:05 Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, and thank you for your recognition, Senator, but I'll tell you that when you make a commitment, you just got to live through to it, and if you have challenges, you also have to communicate those challenges and i just feel that many times i can tell you if i were to chair the health and hospitals committee the department of human services would have been in front of me every three to four weeks until we could get it done because i'm a firm believer in what gets monitored gets done so if we monitoring it he ain't getting due and it's not to say that the individuals are sitting in this world because there's a lot of people here that they're not doing their part but something is not aligning the stars are not aligning here and i see that you have a good team in front of us but something in aligning and we gotta figure this out and at And at the end of the day, if ain't aligning, uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. So Commissioner, you are the reason for the season.

- 1:10:34 That's just how it works. So you gotta figure this out. We don't have this conversation all the time. When we come back, it's the same thing. I don't know. Francis, you recognize your burning questions. Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I want to make sure that we're leaving our appreciation to those employees that go above and beyond the call of duty every single day. Working under adverse conditions, lack of vehicle, lack of adequate pay, you know, you continue to be the shining light of the Department of Human services and i want to say that we extend our appreciation to you for that so i don't want this discussion today demoralize you and i'm hoping that again we could redouble our efforts because this community truly truly needs each and every one of you to do your part so i express my appreciation for all that you do um the rank and file employees all that you do again my question As a close-up question, it's twofold. One, Commissioner, how are you addressing the behavioral health of those employees that continue to go out there and above and beyond provide, because they're exposed?
- 1:11:59 From what I've heard, what I've seen for myself, they're very much exposed every day that they go out there. What are you doing for their behavioral health? And my second question to that is, what about this budget that's bringing you pause? What this whole discussion today have done for you, and what do you pledge to do moving forward to address those concerns that have been raised here during this budget process today? Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the time.
- 1:12:31 Thank you for the questions, your burning questions. I have two assistant commissioners that are over programs that do majority of the work with the divisions, and I'll have them address what they're doing for behavioral health for their teams. AC Benjamin and AC Baptiste, I just want to take a shout at that. Assistant Commissioner Danelle Baptiste. Thank you for the question, Senator. I think that that is something that's very important. And me coming on board, one of the things that I did do was meet with all of my programs and my program staff to understand what their needs were.
- 1:13:10 And that was top of the list, especially for all of us. We're dealing with vulnerable populations. The honest answer is we do not have a solution as yet. There's only so much encouragement and positive words of affirmation that I can give to an employee. So some of the things that we are trying to do is fix some of the challenges that's creating the burden on the employees so that includes the physical building spaces and so the commissioner spoke to a lot of the things that we're trying to do in that area and we have started talking as a senior leadership team about morale boosting events and bringing back some of the things that the department of human services used to do so that's what i would have to say for now assistant commissioner carla benjamin all of the things that ac baptize said but as well as having been in the shoes of a lot of the employees on my side of the shop.
- 1:14:08 I mean, I came up through the ranks and so one of the things that I make sure that I do is to remain involved and try to not ask anyone to do anything that I wouldn't be willing to do. And so I make myself available, I have the conversations. whenever there is an opportunity to celebrate staff we do even if even if it means you know coming out of our own pockets at times we just try to make sure that we are a part of despite the fact that the prevailing notion is that us versus them the SLT and boots on the ground we're one we're one team and one family if it needs to get done we get in there and get it done Senator Francis, are you satisfied with the responses?
- 1:14:58 Obviously my question to the commissioner is what about this budget that presents some challenges for her and what will she be doing moving forward? She has heard a number of concerns that have been raised by myself and my colleagues, what she intend to do to address some of those concerns. I think the concern that I have the most is never having enough people and workforce to do to get the services yes we have the vacancies but it also goes back to being able to do the delivery of service and good vehicles and then looking at our facilities and all of those and making that I am hearing all of you and their same colleagues because I like the fact that you're so passionate about our community just like I am and how we need to best serve I the concerns I have the ones that keep me awake the most is the ones that we don't are not able to get to or don't know about and the ones that we're not able to serve like some of the things sometimes it's just not enough money or not enough resources but trying our best so what I'm going to do is to fight a little bit harder maybe a lot harder maybe be a little louder it's not necessarily my personality to be loud but maybe at this stage of the game will be a little bit louder look at alternative and creative resources to address some of the shortages not just in the GBI we've done a pretty good job I'd say of applying for general federal resources to supplement the GBI so it's not as a hardship on the local government to do that so I think that will push our push harder but the next steps for us is higher, higher, higher, and then to fix our facilities to ensure that and the full prudent replacements will help with that. So I think if we have a better place of more support that allows for to serve more people, it also adjusts the mental health issue that you broke up. So even though they were gonna address the ones that are working now, if they're added support and added resources to that, that it allows for a little bit of a less stress for the caseloads and whatnot.
- 1:17:07 Thank you, Senator Francis. Senator James, Maurice James, you're recognized for your burning question. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a burning question, and I have a, if possible, if I can, make a recommendation. My question has to

do with child care providers. Are the payments up to date to the providers? And I understand that there are grants that have not been offered to them.

1:17:47 Can you address those child care grants? Yes. AC Benjamin will have the update on the child care providers, and all the grants have actually been offered to them. All they had to do was apply for the funding, so, but I'll allow. Have they applied? I HAVE THE NUMBERS OF HOW MANY HAVE APPLIED AND FOR WHAT. ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CARLA BENJAMIN, AS COMMISSIONER SAID, ALL OF THE GRANTS HAVE BEEN OFFERED. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE BIGGEST GRANT THAT SITS ON THAT LISTING IS A CHILD CARE STABILIZATION GRANT. THE ONLY THING THAT THOSE FUNDS CAN BE UTILIZED FOR IS TO GIVE TO PROVIDERS FOR THE OPERATIONAL costs. And we actually made a request to the Office of Child Care to allow child care providers to apply more than once because initially they were only allowed to apply once.

1:18:42 Across the territory there were 57 child care providers that were eligible because they had to be licensed or certified by March 21st of 2021 in order to be eligible. There were 57 eligible providers and 42 providers applied. We're trying to get the word out because usually when child care has initiatives, child care providers assume that it's only for those providers who participate in our subsidy program but these ARPA dollars are for everyone and so so we're trying to get the word out there. We also modified our state plan to allow for one of the covid allowances which is for essential workers to be to be categorically eligible so we don't look at salary as a qualifier depending upon what your salary is an essential as an essential worker they may a bit of a may be a bit of a co-payment but they continue to be eligible and then we also just completed our market rate survey so we're looking at increasing the subsidies from what is now a little bit under 40 to as much as 100 because the federal government that allows us to do that. So that's going to allow us to hopefully attract more child care providers to participate in the subsidy program as well as to attract more child care providers across the board. I'm not sure if answered your entire question. We are not up to date on payments but one of the reasons why we're not up to date at this point is one of the grants that sits on that is a is a cursor grant and that allows us to pay for what would have been co-payments or the difference between subsidies and the full rate and so uh the cursor uh grant is going to allow us to pay for the the provider's full enrollment depending upon whether the children attend or not and pay the the full rate and we're allowed to do that currently the obligation deadline is September 30th, but we're allowed to encumber funds up until the end of the liquidation deadline and we've also applied for a waiver. So hopefully that will extend out and we'll be able to get these dollars into the hands of the providers.

1:20:57 Yeah, it's important to get the dollars in their hands like you said. I just want to say to Commissioner Kazi Gomez, I believe in pay equity at all levels and not to diminish A.C. Baptiste, who has impressed me yesterday and today, but you also have to think about A.C. Benjamin. I have. Okay, so I am advocating publicly that we affect morale at all levels, and so it's very important, equity, fairness, pay equity. So I'm advocating for her. Thank you. and I don't know I don't know her personally I need to this to put that out there okay it thank you thank you thank you Senator James but why do we have to advocate what's the issue why do we have to advocate is in your face why do we have to advocate I mean I appreciate the advocacy I've actually already put in for everything so it's not like an oversight for me I'm just waiting for approval that's been for quite some time so you realize that I'm well aware of it so we have a creating a morale problem yes in what happened here right I've done what I need to do and to do the follow-up remember is your legacy you know. I understand. All right. Senator Capehart, you're recognized for your burning question. Thank you, Madam Chair. Today, as one of my colleagues asked, the team as to what your salaries were, and I sat here and I thought about the case walkers, the eligibility walkers,

1:22:58 the people who are on the ground doing the hard work I know that when you are one of those workers that you see a caseload of 180 clients per worker these people need an urgency to in address their increase for the caseworkers they need to be paid and to revisit and make sure that retroactive pay for foster care program these people waiting for their monies please make that our urgency to work on these individuals because they deserve their raises for all the work that they do a hundred and eighty clients per walker come on guys you make decent salaries make these people happy and comfortable give them a moral booster to feel good coming to work because they're gonna sit there and say but all of them they're making all this money what about us it's it brings some fairness to them because you're going to have a mass exodus of people retiring in the next few months have you received any retirement papers from individuals who are in these key positions yes yes no yes there you go and one question I have to additionally acts is there there's one senior center on the island of St. Croix. I remember back in the day there was up to a total of five. Are you addressing the need for the Frederick Stead individuals? Are you thinking about creating another senior center in the town of Frederick Stead?

1:24:57 Thank you for the question. We're actually going to do a collaborative project with the Virgin Islands Housing Authority at Walter I.M. Hodge when they open there. So yes, did answer your question okay great madam chair if one more burning question you have for Medicaid the 3,000 3,700 people what how much it is 37,000 people that are on Medicaid

do you have a Cigna agreement for the pharmaceutical program for it for the recipients to receive their their medication Cigna as one of your providers who pays for that pharmaceutical Cigna is no longer a provider for DHS we've to actually change providers to script guide script head and that contract is up to date I double-check work exactly where it is but at last I was at so we're still waiting for the executed contract okay great Thank you madam chair. Thank you Senator Capehart, Senator Gittins. You recognize your burning question. I hope mine is with a Z and not a S but you know obviously seeing that retention and hiring is a problem but the common denominator is salaries and while we take care of the folks in the exempt positions we also need to take care of those on the other end and those that are getting the services done and making you look good have we looked at probably consolidating some of these positions and joining salaries so that we can start attracting people have we looked at that I'm a preliminary thank you for the question but yes senator getting preliminary discussions but nothing

1:27:17 solid yet good so let's move away from that because I wanted to ask who is this public consulting group and what is HIE or something like that I see two large contracts for public consulting one at eight hundred and seven thousand dollars and one for over a million dollars so PCG we have two contracts with them for our Medicaid program one of which while it's executed because we have not fully implemented the project they have not been able to begin the work and that's for individual identification and verification I believe it is under Medicaid so they have not started that work the other contract is for HIE health information exchange which has been led out of the Medicaid program because of the funding that's being provided so we are working with the Office of Health information technology out of um the office of the governor and so pcg has been project managing that project okay so we'll we'll talk more on that i guess on the sixth but i also see a big contract here for 279 000 to provide meals on saint jana we're talking about all the problems with Meals on Wheels. Is this for Meals on Wheels?

1:28:50 Yes, that would be for Meals on Wheels. And how many seniors are we serving on St. John? So for home-delivered meals, we are serving 23 individuals on St. John. I'm sorry, say that again? 23 individuals for home-delivered meals. And for congregate centers, 93 individuals in St. John. So 23 homes, delivered, and 93.

1:29:20 In congregate settings. Okay. Now, and lastly, I see a discrepancy. If it's an error, please correct it. But we don't just eat Monday to Friday and not on a holiday. I'm seeing that in St. Thomas, St. John, you're doing what should be done, either doubling up on the meals or let him come and walk on the holiday because all of us deserve to eat fresh cooked food. But on St. Croix, people receiving messages, text messages, phone calls, and telling them they need to fend for themselves on a holiday.

1:30:06 That's not to be. I want that to be a thing of the past so our seniors on St. Croix needs to eat on a holiday as well fix that fast thank you thank you and just for the record that happens in both districts that's not it happens in both this just letting you know it happens in both districts do you have a waitlist for seniors in St. John the wheels of it meals on wheels program I don't believe If we have our wait list in St. John, we've been able to accommodate anyone who's been requesting those services in St. John.

1:30:44 Okay. Do you have a special budget for YRC? Yes. When you say special budget, is there a budget for YRC? Yes. Do you have a set of say for YRC? Good afternoon, Lady McGrath, CFO. We have \$1 million appropriation that was from the ending of 2022 for equipment and fixtures at YRC.

1:31:15 Aye. Biden. I will leave AC Benjamin speak to it as she has oversight. Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin, the \$1 million funding that CFO references was be utilized for YRC and the Annas Hope group home and yes we have been utilizing those funds for improvements at both facilities um by my records we have less than 400 000 left somewhere around 360. from what year from it came on at the end of 2022 and made available until expended And we still have \$400,000, what is the plan to expend those dollars?

1:32:07 We have a number of projects at both sites. Of course we have to navigate the procurement process. We have facility improvements. For instance, at Anna's Hope Group Home, we've done the pressure washing, stripping, painting. We're now redoing the kitchen, updating the equipment there at YRC. We're doing air conditioning. There is an initiative that the judges of the family court divisions and a number of community individual organizations, including UVI, we were refurbishing the farming program.

1:32:54 Y'all purchased new beds in there? Because I saw some pictures of some beds in there that ain't suitable for. I don't even want to use the word, okay? Have you all purchased new mattresses? I'm not sure which facility you're referring to because I have seen pictures of beds from both facilities. No, we have not purchased new mattresses for YRC. Have you seen the new mattresses in there? Have you seen them, Commissioner? Yes. You would sleep on them? No, no, ma'am. But not all, I'm not sure which ones you're referring to, so there's ones in the courtyard that we don't use anymore.

- 1:33:29 Do you want me to bring the picture up on the screen? I don't play with me today, no. I've referred. I have it. Let's discuss and find out where that is. It is bad. I just want to make sure that we're where it is exactly in the facility. You know exactly where it is. If you have a visit, I know what it matches them look like. Okay. Yeah, it's not good. Okay. The adult vocational programs, do we have adult vocational programs in each district here in the Virgin Islands? Adult vocational, so we work with our Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services.
- 1:34:02 Yes or no? Sorry, Senator, can you please repeat the question? The adult vocational programs. Program, programs, yes, whichever one. So we have a number of programs, I'm not sure which ones you're referring to. Students with disabilities graduate from high school how are we accommodating them yes so we do have programs for our disabilities and vocational rehabilitation program we have my apologies one second please so we currently have for this fiscal year in St. Thomas, we've had 27 referrals, 19 applicants, 17 who have been eligible. We have 15 with employment plans and 17 who are actually in the program. We have on St. Croix 39 referrals, 28 applicants, 22 who are eligible, 16 with employment plans, and 14 in implementation what is a program though we offer for some of the students we offer we help them do coaching and put together employment plans to determine what they would like to do then we we pay for their training so whether that's college or it's a training course we pay for those and we also just provide overall counseling to those individuals so you have a post-secondary plan for those students correct you see it yourself how long are you working in a department four months and you could tell me that you know for sure that
- 1:35:52 there's a post-secondary plan for students with disabilities or graduate from a high school so I can say for sure that I know that we are paying for students to receive training whether at universities or through other training programs but that's not what was I was asking so when a student graduated last May from high school what how does that how did that look last me I cannot speak to last me well you ain't the only person in the department so I'm very interested in that information uh we have actually Kimberly Washington our acting administrator for a division of in Saint Thomas you don't know commissioner exactly the process not a process but you should be able to know whether or not miss Kimberly Washington of your department so I know that as So we had 28 in fiscal year 23, 11 in St. Thomas and 18 in St. Croix taking vocational courses and so if they've been coming through the program and they're eligible then we're paying for training and our college for those individuals. If you're referring to a specific individual I'm not sure if I would be able to.
- 1:37:09 I'm just making sure that we do have visible programs in the territory overall that provides true support to those students who leave high school, those adults, they now become adults. I think we should be more visible. So I would say that we need to do a better campaign regarding the types of services we offer and how and how we do that so I know that we need to improve in that area all right and then uh I think there's a point of inquiry from Senator Gittins and then um we're going to wrap up with um getting the information with regards to your key performance indicators Senator Gittins you're recognized for your thank you uh Madam Chair you went somewhere that I was hesitant to go at earlier with regards to YRC and the breakdown of their budget so you handle that one I want to ask though um so DHS has a crucial um emergency support function uh during disaster time where in your budget can I find funding that address uh this emergency support function there's nothing in our budget currently for ESF6 that's absorbed in all of our programs so our emergency support coordinators any of the supplies and water for the shelters we share that responsibly with other agencies um and so there's no line item budget for ESF6 well the victim received additional funding specifically you all have some homework to do from the last time we had a hearing and I'm I'm going to be making a comeback towards this, okay?
- 1:38:59 Thank you. All right, Senator Johnson, your quick point of information. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I hear them speaking about all of these equipment. I just had a tour at YRC. Are they not still washing dishes by hand down there? Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin, not that I'm aware of. the dishwasher is working in YRZ as far as I'm aware Senator all right thank you I know that's not the case though okay thank you Senator Johnson your key performance indicators so do you have a strategic plan to address all that we talked about today and more and please forward to this committee your KPIs, because the KPIs that we saw in the budget book, I'm not certain what they truly represent. So please forward your KPIs to this committee. As well as your critical vacancies, those that you consider critical, because you went into fiscal year 2023 with I think it was 169 positions vacant. I believe most of them were funded at 50%.
- 1:40:18 You hired 43, and I don't see you hiring 100% of those positions, so you need to send back to this committee what are your critical vacancies that you must have. We cannot continue to fund 100 plus positions sitting in a department when we need funding for other purposes. So you need to identify your critical vacancies, please. So we look forward to getting that information from you, and we're going to allow you to close.
- 1:40:54 Madam Chairwoman, I appreciate the opportunity along with the committee members and the non-committee members present for allowing us to give testimony on our budget for fiscal year 2024 for the Department of Human Services. Special appreciation to our team, not necessarily just our senior leadership team, but our administrators, and our line staff

and their boots on the ground that continue to serve. I truly appreciate the work that they do. I know we have continuous work to do in the future and we'll always strive to make sure that we're better than we were yesterday. So together as a team, not only with this legislative branch but the governor's cabinet as well as the governor, we appreciate the opportunity. So thank you very much for the day. Thank you and I have one other question that just came in. The USW Masters, have they received their salary increases? Good afternoon, Senator. Michael Trautman, Deputy Commissioner.

1:41:51 Not all entirety, not all of those employees, but the balance should get their increases in the next 30 days. What's the challenge with them getting the increases? Those- How much people are we talking about? approximately about 75 employees and the bulk of them were federally funded employees and so with like the SIU they had to revise the budget sheets before we can implement those increases so that process has been completed so it's just a matter of doing an opus now. So they should see their salary increases as well as their retroactive payment? Probably not simultaneously but one first and then the next. Absolutely because you have to see the salary then the retro. Correct. All right All right. So we look forward to hearing that they receive their money. Say within what?

1:42:38 The next 30 days. The next 30 days. Yes. So we're now in July, so by the end of August? Correct. And then the retro. We should see the retro sometime in September? That is correct. So we need to see all that's done before the end of the fiscal year, correct? Yes, Senator. Thank you. All right, colleagues. We have exhausted all that we can ask for today because we have other departments that have to come before us to the Department of Human Services. We know that there is a lot to contemplate around the Department of Human Services, and we need to use our committee process to really drill down on what's happening in the Department of Human Services. So Commissioner and your team, I'm certain that you will be hearing from our committee and to ask you some follow-up questions so we could determine how best to move forward with the 2024 budget.

1:43:37 The committee stands in recess for five minutes. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'll see you next time. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

1:52:28 We'll be right back. The Committee on Budget Appropriations and Finance is back on the record. I'm going to ask the Madam Clerk to read block number two into the record.

1:53:27 Block number two, BI Office of Territorial Public Defenders, Invited Testifier, Julie Smith Todman Esquire, Interim Chief Public Defender, Office of Territorial Public Defender. Madam Chair, that ends the reading of block two. Thank you, Madam Clerk. I'm going to ask the members, the staff, the leadership rather of the Virgin Islands Public Defender's Office to please put your name and title on the record and we're going to start with Mrs. Todman. You may proceed. Thank you.

1:54:04 Good afternoon. I am Julie Smith Todman, Interim Chief Territorial Public defender Good afternoon Ronald Moorhead and physical accountant Good afternoon Ronell Stephens assistant administrator Thank you, and do you have anyone else online or I don't see anyone in st. Thomas is It's just three of you today. All right, you may proceed with your testimony Please recognize the mic of the testifier Go ahead, try it again. Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Donna A. Fred Gregory, Chairperson Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, other Honorable Senators of the Committee, Senators of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, others present in the Legislative Chambers, and the listening and viewing audience.

1:55:07 I am Julie Smith Todman, Interim Chief Territorial Public Defender for the Office of the Territorial Public Defender, here and after referred to as OTPD. I am here today with OTPD Assistant Administrator Rennell Stevens and OTPD Fiscal Accountant Ronald Moorhead. Thank you for the opportunity to present our fiscal year 2024 budget request in the amount of \$5,372,220.

1:55:50 The same allotment provided by the 34th legislature for fiscal year 2023. Let me take this opportunity to thank the entire staff of the OTPD for their perseverance, diligence, support, team spirit, commitment and dare I say the patience necessary for defending the multitude of clients that are appointed to the office and going above and beyond to perform the demanding and daunting tasks associated with handling their matters. I know it can seem like a thankless job at times, however your dedication and hard work are indeed acknowledged and appreciated. Thank you.

1:56:50 you. On behalf of myself, the OTPD staff, and the Public Defender Administration Board, we thank the former Chief Territorial Public Defender, Samuel Joseph, for his many years of service and his unwavering support to the mission of the Public Defender's Office and the people of the Virgin Islands. The Office of the Public Defender was established in 1973 pursuant to Title V, Chapter 302, Section 3520, et sequentially, of the Virgin Islands Code for the purpose of representing indigent criminal defendants appearing before the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands and now the Virgin Islands Supreme Court. The OTPD will litigate the rights of its clients and the interests of the office up to and including

the United States Supreme Court if necessary. The Office of the Public Defender is comprised of two divisions, one located in the District of St. Croix and the other located in the District of St. Thomas, St. John.

- 1:58:10 Each division is currently staffed with attorneys licensed to practice law in the United States Virgin Islands or specifically admitted to practice law in the Virgin Islands on behalf of the OTPD. The OTPD shall have such other secretarial, investigative and clerical personnel as are necessary or desirable as determined by the chief public defender. The St. Croix district is currently comprised of five trial attorneys. One trial attorney is also assigned to handle juvenile matters. A new trial attorney is slated to join the St. Croix District on July 31, 2023.
- 1:59:04 Other staff include the administrator, one investigator, one fiscal accountant, one paralegal who is bilingual, two legal secretaries, one who is bilingual, the director of information technology, one receptionist, and one custodian. The St. Thomas St. John District is presently comprised of four trial attorneys including myself and one appellate attorney. A new trial attorney is slated to join the district on August 14th, 2023. Other staff in the St. Thomas District include the assistant administrator, one investigator, One paralegal, four legal secretaries, including the appellate secretary, and one secretary who is bilingual.
- 2:00:03 One receptionist, one messenger, and one custodian. Several of the OTPD personnel, because of their scope of work, serve both districts. Both staff members include the Chief Territorial Public Defender, Fiscal Accountant, Director of Information Technology, and the Appellate Attorney. All employees of the office are unclassified and are members of the Government Employees Retirement System. Presently, the Office of the Territorial Public Defender is comprised of 29 employees.
- 2:00:46 The legislature established the Office of the Public Defender pursuant to 5 VI Code, Virgin Islands Code 3521. Section 3521 specifically states there is established the Office of the Public Defender. In Title V, Virgin Islands Code 3523, the legislature mandated that the Chief Public Defender shall prepare and submit an annual budget for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Territorial Public Defender to the legislature.
- 2:01:35 Section 3523, which refers to our office as Office of the Territorial Public Defender, conflicts with other sections of the statute establishing the Public Defender Office. The discrepancy in the name of the office has created some confusion for the public. The Office of the Public Defender has unofficially and through custom adopted the term territorial to differentiate ourselves from that of the Federal Public Defender Office.
- 2:02:10 Over the years, the community and our clients have come to identify our office as the Office of the Territorial Public Defender. Former Chief Public Defenders appearing before this body for legislative hearings in the past and most recently have referred to our office as the Office of the Territorial Public Defender. As such, to avoid confusion between the local public defender office and the federal public defender office, we respectfully request that the legislature enact legislation to officially change the name of the local public defender office from Office of the Public Defender to Office of the Territorial Public Defender.
- 2:03:05 We are available to assist the legislature in drafting the necessary amendments. The OTPD is a semi-autonomous government agency governed by the Public Defender Administration Board, which consists of five trial attorneys from our community. the President of the Virgin Islands Bar Association, or his or her designee, two appointees of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one of whom must be a resident of the St. Thomas St. John District, and one a resident of the District of St. Croix, one appointee of the Governor of the Virgin Islands, and one appointee of the President of the Virgin Islands Legislature. The terms of the members appointed by the governor and the president of the legislature are the same as the terms of the persons who appointed them. Of the two members appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one shall serve for a term of three years and the other one shall serve for a term of two years. A vacancy on the board is filled for the unexpired term of the previous member.
- 2:04:26 The current members of the board are Clive Rivers, Esquire, Chairman, Pamela Colon, Esquire, Vice Chair, Melanie Turnbull, Esquire, Ezard Winter, Esquire, and Amos Carty, Jr. Esquire. The Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution sets forth rights related to criminal prosecution. It guarantees that in all criminal prosecution, the accused shall have the assistance of counsel for his or her defense, did not have the right to a court-appointed attorney.
- 2:05:14 Sixty years ago, the Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372, U.S. 335, 1963. The Court held that states must abide by the Sixth Amendment. *Gideon* established a fundamental legal protection for persons accused of crimes and ensured the rights of indigent defendants to effective representation. A public defender is a fierce, fearless, and passionate defender of the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
- 2:05:58 It is the duty of the public defender to counsel and defend their clients at every stage of the criminal proceedings, arrest, probable cause determination, advice of rights, bail hearings, arraignment, pretrial proceedings, jury and bench trials, and appellate proceedings, and to fight for other remedies before or after conviction that they consider to be in the interest of

justice. Public defenders are guardians of our constitutional rights.

- 2:06:34 defenders zealously defend their clients. In doing this, we are holding us all to the beliefs that these rights are for everyone, not just the innocent, the wealthy, or those socially or politically connected. The right to counsel is a fundamental one. It means a criminal defense attorney is there to uphold everyone's constitutional rights, even those accused of violent crimes. Our public defenders know that our constitutional rights are only as strong as our willingness to uphold them in the face of the worst accusations. Just as we recently celebrated 175 years of emancipation in the territory, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the 60th anniversary of Gideon versus Wainwright. The ruling by the United States Supreme Court that the noble ideal expressed in our Constitution that the right of those accused of crime to counsel is fundamental and essential cannot be realized if the poor man accused of a crime has to face accusers without a lawyer to assist him i am equally proud to acknowledge and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the office of the public defender by the legislature i am proud of the immeasurable work diligence dedication commitment and sacrifice of the otpd staff. To paraphrase the poem on the Statute of Liberty, bring me your tired, your poor, the homeless tempest-tossed. The OTPD represents those within our community with insufficient resources, suffering from strained circumstances,
- 2:08:42 and an oppressive lack of money. Many of our clients are also mentally ill, homeless and suffer from various types of addictions. The day starts early and ends late for our staff. At sunrise our investigators go to the Bureau of Corrections and Golden Grove Adult Correctional Facility to meet with the persons arrested to gather pertinent information and to contact the arrestees family members. The paralegals contact those persons who are able to afford bail and who are not located in jail, locate family members, identify potential third-party custodian for clients who may need one, prepare third-party custodian affidavits and provide other information to clients and family members as needed. The attorneys review the probable cause fact sheets for each person arrested, review the charges, meet the arrestees and discuss the charges and facts of the case with them prior to the probable cause hearing. At the probable cause hearing, based on case law and other legal precedent, the public defender will challenge any illegal arrest and will make oral motions to dismiss those charges.
- 2:10:05 The public defender then makes oral motions for release based on the U.S. Constitution, the Revised Organic Act of 1954, Section 3, and Rule 5-1 of the Virgin Islands Rules of Criminal Procedure. The public defender also seeks intervention services, mental health evaluations and treatment, and drug addiction treatments for the clients who need it at this early juncture.
- 2:10:38 The work of the OTPD never ceases. The probable cause hearings and arraignment hearings are only the beginning stages in the efforts of the OTPD to represent and defend its clients. Each client and their case is unique and require endless hours of preparation, investigation by the investigators and attorneys, client interviews and meetings, research of pertinent issues and case law motion practice court appearances witness interviews crime scene visits discovery review video surveillance body camera footage document review statement review etc consultation with experts as necessary trial preparation bench trial jury selection and trial and the first right of appeal. Territory-wide, the OTPD has 939 open cases as of June 30, 2023.
- 2:11:46 The St. Croix District has 556 total cases pending as of June 30, 2023, 367 felonies, 82 murders, 83 misdemeanors, 8 juvenile matters, 75 driving under the influence cases and one appeal. As of June 30th, 2023, 151 new cases were appointed in the St. Croix district, 75 felonies, includes three murders, 49 misdemeanors, nine juvenile matters, 14 DUI cases, and three DV show cause matters.
- 2:12:43 There are 383 total cases pending in the St. Thomas St. John District as of June 30, 2023. 238 felonies, 9 murders, 81 misdemeanors, 16 juvenile matters, 31 DUI cases, and 8 appeals. A total of 174 new cases was appointed in the St. Thomas St. John District as of June 30, 2023. 94 felonies, 3 murders, 42 misdemeanors, 10 juvenile matters, 11 DUI cases, 1 appeal, 1 DV show cause and 12 extraditions. The average caseload for trial attorneys ranges from 69 to 100 cases or more within any month. There are five judges and two magistrate judges in the St. Thomas St. John District and five judges and two magistrate judges in the District of St. Croix. The OTPD is presently short-staffed and is actively recruiting lawyers, secretarial staff and a network specialist to fully staff both districts to handle the mandates of the office and zealously defend its clients through the judicial process. The work of the OTPD is essential to maintain the balance of justice within the territory and protecting the rights of the underprivileged through the criminal justice system. The budget as requested is essential to maintain staffing levels at present levels, to maintain staffing at present levels, maintain our offices and working environment, and to
- 2:14:45 provide the highest level of service to our clients. We ask that you honor our request to fund the OTPD at the level requested. The OTPD has met has had many accomplishments large and small to date. The OTPD in alignment with guidelines prescribed by the American Rescue Plan Act and the state and local fiscal recovery funds successfully applied

for and received funding that had been set aside to provide premium pay payments to 18 eligible employees. Those funds were intended to respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to those workers who were both needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential services and unable to perform their duties remotely. Premium pay was designed to compensate workers that by virtue of their employment were forced to take on additional burdens and faced higher risk of exposure as a result. We installed and updated the air conditioning system in our St. Croix building. One unit was installed on the first floor in our Americans with Disabilities Act compliant visitor room and one unit was installed on the second floor in 2022 the office of the territorial public defender held its annual staff training and appreciation day events for the first time since the covid 19 pandemic

2:16:40 in 2022 and 2023 several attorneys of the otpd contributed their time and expertise as coaches to high school students participating in the annual virgin islands high school appellate moot court competition sponsored by the superior court of the virgin islands and the virgin islands bar association the otpd continued to invest in our personnel by providing training opportunities for legal administrative and secretarial staff to improve and learn new skills The OTPD has collaborated with stakeholders, agencies and nonprofit organizations to assist clients and former clients to file petitions for expungements. The OTPD continues to collaborate with community organizations to assist clients to obtain referrals and funding to attend inpatient and outpatient drug treatment facilities. Our goals for the rest of this year and for fiscal year 2024 are varied and extensive and include measures to rehabilitate and renovate the offices in St. Croix and St. Thomas, to create office spaces that reduce the risk of exposure to mold and mildew and are conducive to a safe working environment.

2:18:11 Work collaboratively with community stakeholders to provide opportunities for education and treatment for clients. Partner with the VI Justice Initiative to promote the Know Your Rights campaign in the community. Refer clients to agencies that assist with expungement of criminal records. recruit qualified staff to fill current vacancies, legal and support staff in both districts. Upgrade computer hardware and operating systems throughout the OTPD.

2:18:48 Implement our new case management system, Carrot Legal, upon completion of the customization that meets the requirements of the OTPD. differential pay, interpretation service compensation for employees who speak a foreign language and use those skills as interpreters and transcribers in the performance of their duties for the OTPD. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to support our fiscal year 2024 budget requests. The OTPD derives its mandate for effective and zealous advocacy on behalf of indigent clients from the United States Constitution and the laws of the United States Virgin Islands.

2:19:39 To effectively perform our duties at the highest level possible, we ask that you fund our budget at the amount requested. team and I are available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you Mrs. Ms. Smith-Todman. So based on Act number 8616, your budget for FY 2023 was \$5,372,220, correct? Yes. Yes, Senator.

2:20:30 The budget asks for FY2024 is the same amount, correct? So the question that I have or the questions is one, did you have to provide any information to the Office of Management and Budget with regards to what your needs are? Ronald Morritt, physical accountant. We did have to submit information to OMB back in February. That's correct.

2:21:09 But they gave you, when you say information, what do you mean? They asked it for the same budget, whatever budget needs are. So they basically said to you that you have a CIN of this amount? That was on there, yes. So how do you accommodate giving salary increases to your staff with the same budget year-on-year? Do you remember what your 2022 budget was? I don't have it on me, but when Chief Joseph sent in the request, we weren't asking for a budget increase.

2:21:41 Okay, so when was the last time you had salary increases? It was 2021. But with Chief Thadman we already made that discussion and we do believe we could start funding budget increases from the vacant positions to start. So are you saying that you don't need the vacant positions? Well we know we're not going to fill all at one time, so we are looking at proposals for the board. Okay, so you need to forward to this committee where your true needs are. Because I just find it, I find that all of the semi-autonomous type entities, all of the budgets came down basically with the same amount from the previous year. So it seems that you were just given a ceiling based on your amounts, based on what you received the year before.

2:22:38 Your Honourable. Your Honourable. That's funny. We heard that. Go ahead. Senator Gregory, we've had a couple of vacancies, and we had vacancies this year, too, in St. Thomas, because two of our attorneys got positions in other locations. So we happen to have had some, I guess, grace within our budget. although we are looking for persons we have identified and we have given a letter of acceptance to an employee an attorney who will be starting in July I believe one in St. Croix and we have one starting in August in St. Thomas we have another attorney who is slated to start not until November when the fiscal year 2024 budget is in effect.

- 2:23:43 So how much vacancies do you have? At present we have, I believe, six, seven vacancies. And your employees are non-classified, what do you call it, unclassified, non-union, exempt? All employees are exempt. So all employees are exempt and they have not received a raise since when? I think it was fiscal year 2021. And Attorney Toddman, Chief Toddman, Acting Chief Toddman, is there a discussion with your board to increase the salaries of these employees that I'm seeing sitting in a well?
- 2:24:27 Yes, there are discussions with the board. I had discussions with the board on July 13th, 2023, and I will be setting up a meeting to have another discussion with them. So y'all did that show up already as to what y'all wanted to look like? Mr. Moorhead has prepared that. So what's the total bottom line number? For personnel, we were looking at about \$234,000.
- 2:24:57 All right, thank you. And you have to include, is that inclusive of the Associated Fringe Benefits? No, it's not. Okay. All right, colleagues, we're going to go to a, we're going to go to a, see I always lean on y'all to tell me. We're going to go to a three minute round and we're going to start with Senator Angel Bulkes, Jr. Senator Bulkes, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to Interim Chief Defender Tadman and her team. The Office of the Public Defender plays a vital role in upholding the principles of justice, fairness, and equality within our legal system and serves as a critical safeguard to ensure that every individual, regardless of socioeconomic status, receives competent legal representation and a fair trial.
- 2:25:57 And I'm happy to have you here before us today, as I believe your office plays a vital role in our society. With the goal of rehabilitating and renovating your offices in both districts, what are the estimated costs of these projects and how exactly will they be funded? The St. Croix office repairs including removing damaged carpeting that we've had for some time and replaced those with tilings in the entire office. The approximate cost is about \$100,000.
- 2:26:46 We are working with a team who will be preparing the request for proposals for us and we're hoping to fund it through the capital projects. We start in fiscal year 2023 and that will continue through fiscal year 2024. In St. Thomas, the proposed repairs and renovations include fixing some of the office that are presently not usable because we are in a rented space.
- 2:27:26 We have spoken to our landlord about making some of those repairs. The approximate cost, the proposal is about \$45,000 that has been budgeted for that. We have received bids for those, and we're just waiting to award the bid. Okay. Are there any alternative plans to seek funding sources, whether through grants to reduce that financial burden? 30 seconds. not at this time senator not at this time okay and i see no no grants uh in the post auditor's report for local or federal grants for fiscal year 24 as well let's move on to the implementation of the new case management system the carrot legal what is what are the expected benefits or cost savings associated with that technological upgrade What is it streamlining for you at this time?
- 2:28:33 I don't know so much about cost saving because everything costs and all the costs have increased. But to be able to present numbers to this agency, whether at the budget hearings, whether it's for the judiciary, whether it's for the judicial council, then we can tell you we have how many murders, how many felonies, how many domestic violence cases, how many domestic violence show cause cases, how many of our gun... How many of our gun cases are domestic violence, or how many of our assault cases are also designated domestic violence cases?
- 2:29:13 How many extraditions? So it helps us keep track of our cases that we could not do as well before. Okay, so it saves on time. I hear that. Thank you for the time, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Bulkas. Senator Blyton, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Good afternoon. And congratulations on your appointment.
- 2:29:47 Let me ask, though, in respect to your agency, I know you said you have 29 employees, have seven vacancies right now, but you have three positions right now in the process of being filled. How many employees do you have on board? On board right now?
- 2:30:15 I'm sorry. Attorneys. How many attorneys do you have on board? We have, can I give, give me one second. We have, I believe I said five attorneys in St. Croix, and four attorneys in St. Thomas, including myself. And how many cases do you have open? In St. Croix, we have 556, and in St. Thomas, 383.
- 2:30:51 So that's probably approximately between terms of case load, 60 plus to 100 per attorney? Yes. So in terms of best practices, what's the recommendation in terms of case load per attorney to carry? Probably no more than about 80. However, because we lost two attorneys in the St. Thomas District, our caseload increased for those of us who were left. Some of us took on additional cases in the other courtrooms.
- 2:31:32 I specifically split those between the attorneys and myself who were present. One minute. And I took on the caseload in the juvenile courtrooms. in St. Croix. We know that there are some vacant positions also. The Deputy Chief handles some

matters. So each attorney does have one or two courtrooms. Usually in the felony courtrooms one attorney is assigned per felony court room and we have one attorney in St. Croix who is assigned to the juvenile 30 seconds and um misdemeanor courtrooms thank you and um in respect to your professional service contracts um i know you have a total of 55 713 do you have any outstanding um obligations any um no senator we have no um back back to okay your rental properties I see you have one that expires in September of this year for \$142,000 for several years, but it's \$11,900 a month. Are you in the process of renegotiating that contract?

2:32:56 Yes, I am. I have spoken to the landlord. I am in the process of reviewing our lease to determine, you know, to be prepared for that discussion with our landlord. And no payments pending for any of your leases? No, Senator. Thank you so much for your responses. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Blighton. Senator James, you're recognized for your three minutes.

2:33:29 Thank you, Madam Chair. Greetings to the people of the U.S. regional islands. Thank you, testifiers, for being here. I see here where you have EJS Project Management Group. If you can just elaborate here for me exactly what are they doing. And they do not have the terms of the contract. It does have \$8,750, and that's within the post audit report, page five of eight they are a project manager and they're handling the sink Roy renovations can you be specific with the renovations so they were replacing the old carpet in the office with waterproof tiling and also painting the interior and they are they have prepared the RFP for us okay thank you for that clarification and for current legal formulas Zola suite client management software said this is paid to date zero dollars but the terms of the contract say \$28,440 per year and the reason why anything wasn't paid out is that something new that just started it's a yearly payment and the subscription isn't up yet so we paid it last year and then invoice hasn't come for the new one. And I really hope and pray moving forward we get some clarity there. So when is it due to be paid? I don't have that with me but it was a yearly subscription. Okay thank you for placing that on the record. And as far as, I can't remember, I think it was trying to remember his name. Joseph, right? Attorney Joseph? Attorney Joseph. Attorney Joseph. First of all, welcome on board. Thank you for your service. I know when he came before us, that was during the height of COVID-19. We were asking about the caseloads.

2:35:28 It was a good former chair of this committee. One minute. We were asking about the caseload and the backlog. I'm assuming everything is back to normal now, right? Trials resumed, Senator. Trials resumed in the Superior Court in, I believe, October of November of 2021. Our offices were the first defenders or defense attorneys to have trials when trials resumed in 2021. We have had trials in 2022. We were scheduled to have some trials in 2023. So there's still a backlog, but we have started to have trials for those clients who choose to go to trial. And ever since then, have there been a decrease in the workforce, or has it remained the same as far as your personnel?

2:36:21 The good thing about our personnel is that they're very well trained. We did lose two of our personnel, one in 2021 and one in early 2022, and they became magistrate judges in the St. Thomas district. In St. Croix, we lost one senior attorney who became a magistrate judge in the St. Croix district. We had replaced the attorney who became a judge in the St. Croix district. We did make some adjustments, and we did get staffing in the St. Thomas, St. John district when we lost the attorney. I believe we had another attorney on board.

2:37:03 But then again, in 2022, two of those attorneys, one who came on to replace the magistrate judge, she ended up getting another position, you know, highly trained individual, went on to a different department in our government agents, in the government. And one returned back to the states and became an instructor for appellate attorneys and appellate students for moot court appellate students in the United States thank you for that my time was called and I appreciate the transparency and and what you said on the record but as you reference them as losses those are gains and gains for the people of the border to show that we have bright minds but as far as what you plan to do when the chair's time if you may you just explain to us what you're doing to fill those um vacancies or positions that were lost, according to you, for those individuals who were promoted or went on to do bigger things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

2:38:05 Thank you, Senator. James, you may proceed with your response. Thank you. We have and we continue to advertise, and that's how come we do have one attorney who was starting in the St. Thomas District in November through our advertisement. She could not come before closing up her practice and different things. She has been with us previously but had to leave for a family matter but has now that has resolved. She has chosen to return to the territory and we are very happy to have her. She is a senior attorney and we have one new attorney who was a law clerk in our Superior court in St. Thomas, and she's joining us in, I believe, August 15th.

2:38:57 And then we have a very senior attorney who's joining our offices in St. Croix next week. So we have a range of very senior attorneys to new attorneys to attorneys who, you know, been practicing for 9, 10, 14 years. And so we're continuously, you know, advertising and interviewing and we do need to replace one secretary that we lost in St. Croix recently and that secretary went on to another office early July and we have advertised we do have we have posted a position I'm sorry Rennell Stevens and we have received applications to do interviews shortly thank you so the what's the

lowest what's the range for the salaries of the public defenders because I'm seeing here in a report that's before us I'm seeing the lowest salary being ninety two thousand is that accurate that would be the newest the newest attorney coming on at zero years barred we are we do not have our own scale what we have done in the past is that we have used the scale of the Department of Justice and we try to pay our attorneys a little bit above that scale because we don't want to lose our attorneys and we find that we don't have a high turnover rate when we when we do that we offer them a little bit more than what they can get at the Department of Justice. So you're basically saying that this 92,000 is in line with is zero to three what is it three right zero years barred zero years barred uh with the office of the department

2:41:05 of justice attorney general well that is the i believe the fiscal 2025 budget 24. well it's they have a three year um you mean a p scale pay scale okay okay so they have a three year pay scale 2023 2024 and 2025 this attorney because we try to to attract good talent we try to pay them a little bit more so we paid them at that the the offer that was made by the former chief was at I believe \$92,000 just a little bit above the fiscal year 2024 pay scale so I believe \$1,000 more than the fiscal your pay scale 2023 pay scale all right thank you for that clarification and then the highest a system public defender is I'm not I'm not talking about a leadership I'm just talking about a system public defender looks like it's It's around 134?

2:42:16 Yes, it is, Senator. And that is based naturally on years of service, et cetera. Years of experience, years barred. And actually some of those attorneys have been with us for a long time, so they've gotten pay raises in between that brought them there to that amount. Okay. All right. Thank you for your responses. Mr. Carrion, you're recognized for your three minutes. Thank you. Good afternoon to the team from the Public Defender's Office. Can you share with us what are some of the challenges, particularly budget-wise, you're facing within your agency?

2:43:07 One of the challenges we're facing is not so much budget-wise, it's probably getting talent, recruiting. Like I said, we've tried to pay our staff a little bit more than what is paid at the Department of Justice for their assistant attorney generals. We are trying to make sure that our staff are paid comparable or more than what is paid in other agencies. That's why we don't have a high turnover. Right now, because of the new pay scale and the new contract for the Assistant Attorney Generals, we are looking at making sure that all of our attorneys who may have been affected by that increase are put on scale at the fiscal year 2024 pay scale. And so I have approached the board, I have spoken to the board, and they have approved that dependent and contingent on the approval of our budget, our fiscal year 2024 budget.

2:44:15 So is that represented, you're saying is it represented in this budget? Well that was just the discussion I had with them on July 13, 2023. And so it is contingent on the budget being approved for fiscal year 2024. And then having the discussion about the additional, the pay raises for the rest of the staff. And we are going to have that discussion because we have worked on preparing the documentation needed for that. Can you give us an example, what's the difference when you say about being competitive with other agencies or what does that difference look like, for example? Well, I can go directly with the assistant attorney generals because those are the attorneys that we go to court with every single day.

2:45:07 They had a pay scale on their last contract that had expired. They had negotiations. So now they do have a new pay scale that covers three fiscal years, fiscal year 2023, fiscal year 2024, and fiscal year 2025. So I've looked at that to see where our attorneys may be lagging in that. I've looked at other agencies to see, and what I've discovered is that some of the other government agencies, the attorneys, there are assistant attorney generals who work for other government agencies. Not all of them, but there are some government agencies where that occurs. I've also looked to see what the salaries... I want you to give me an example of what that difference looks like.

2:45:52 So compared to what you've seen in the AG's office or any other department to what your attorney gets paid. Well, let's start with our newest hire. Our newest hire is going to, who has zero years barred, is going to be paid from the fiscal year 2024 pay scale. But she's going to be paid \$1,000 more than that pay scale for an attorney who has zero years barred. Okay. That gives us an example of where you are. And you're addressing this with the board, right? I have. Get their approval. My time has been gone. Thank you, Madam Chair.

2:46:32 Thank you, Senator Carrion. Senator Novole Francis-June, recognized for your three minutes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to everyone. Certainly good afternoon to Attorney Smith-Thudman and her team at the Office of Territorial Public Defender. and just for the record I've submitted a bill draft to address the naming issue regarding the Public Defender's Office if I'm not preempted by anyone else but I think it's high time that we address that particular issue further I want to congratulate you on your 50 year anniversary and of course that was done by the 10th Legislature of the Verzones in their wisdom to make sure that we had equal representation at that level. So I didn't see much about your KPIs, key performance indicators. Are you practicing performance-based budgeting and you're monitoring your KPIs? Yes, we are. I can tell you as of our case loads and our resolutions in 2022 we resolved 220 245 cases in in the territory between st. Thomas and st. Croix between plea offers matters that got dismissed persons who went on pre pre-trial innovation intervention programs trials where we have civil compromises consent decrees and one

and ten or so matters that went to private councils so in the territory we resolved 245 or closed out 245 cases very well in 2022 i only got three minutes so and you that's okay and you indicated that you have 938 open cases

2:48:21 how long have those been open is that an annual um percentage or or this is over a span of time over a span of time our oldest case um is a 2014 case that our our office was in 2016 and we had some delays in that matter because of the hurricanes in 2017 and then the pandemic But that matter is coming up. We also had some murder cases that were delayed.

2:48:54 Please be succinct with the court. Be succinct. With the court. Right? Yes. Succinct. So in regards to, do you have any bilingual attorneys assigned to your office or multilingual? We do not have any bilingual attorneys at this moment. We will have one coming on board in November. Okay, that's very good. Look forward to that. rental collections or revenues I know that you do you own the building you that you're in and you have some rentals you have individual tenants in that building correct yes on the St. Croix district yes okay and I didn't see you mention anything about your revenues how much money you get from that rental and what is being done with our funding after paying for the building of course time we hold up most of our money for major repairs of the building for St.

2:49:47 I don't have the total, but we collect \$900 a month from one tenant and then \$19.25 from the other, and everybody's current. Very well. And you said the money is, Madam Chair, if I may just wrap up, you said the funding actually goes back towards repairs of the building? We're holding funds in case of major repairs. Okay. So how do you require that information in terms of your revenue collection or your rental collection on that building? Where do you capture that information? We did submit our bank reconciliations with the account.

2:50:25 To post audit? Post audit and the Department of Finance. Very well. And did you receive any CURES money or any other federal monies most recently during this fiscal year? We requested, but still waiting to receive. Okay, very well. Thank you. And have you received all of your quarterly funding from Office of Management and Budget? Yes, we do get our allotment monthly. Monthly? Yes. Very well. Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

2:50:56 Thank you, Senator Francis. Let's go back to the rental properties. And let's go back to your revenues. So how much revenues do you generate on an annual basis and does that go into a special fund at the Department of Finance or that is managed by you as an entity? It goes into our checking account and is managed by the office. Okay.

2:51:24 So that's not in our post audit report. So what is that amount of money that you generate on an annual basis in revenues? I could I could calculate is 900 for 900 for one and 1925 for the other I could calculate. Give me the number and what do you use those funds for? We're is holding in the checking account we're holding for major repairs at the office. So you hold it for major repairs? We do have to do some repairs to our roof in the St.

2:51:59 Croix office we have some leaks so that's one of the projects that you know we that has to come online and so we do anticipate that that coming online during fiscal year 2024 handling those repairs okay so you collect nine thousand hours a month you say about no nine hundred and that's about ten that's about ten thousand eight hundred ten thousand eight hundred a year so how much money do you have in your checking account as we speak and did you do you have a mortgage on that building we do not have a mortgage on that building thank you thank goodness and how is your insurance for the building covered your property insurance that's covered under the central government policy so you collecting money for your rent out oh it's good so the central you comfortable with a central government policy covering your property insurance?

2:53:07 The former chief was, yes. That's a bad idea. Well, Your Honor, I keep on saying that, Senator. You know, we will be reviewing and I'll be reviewing all of our procedures. and so we will be making based on uh what you've indicated we'll be taking a look at that to see if we have to have secondary insurance well in secondary um you purchase a billing outright and you should be carrying insurance on it you collect rent on it so you should be collecting you should be um you should be paying for your insurance you need to look into what the cost is for your insurance, you are receiving rent on that building, so there are expenses associated with carrying a building with an asset like that, so how much money do you have in that account?

2:54:05 As the last report, I think it was \$68,000. Okay, so you have \$68,000. And the details are \$64,000. The details about the tenants are on page 5 of 8 of the post-addict. So you collect about 33,900. I would strongly suggest that you look at what the insurance cost is. It's probably very high, but you need to at least give it a look-see to make a determination as to how many units do you have in that building?

2:54:38 We have four total units, but only two are rented. One of the four is used as our ADA compliant office so that we can meet with clients who, because we don't have an elevator, who cannot handle our stairs. Okay, so I know that a few years ago in St. Thomas, y'all purchased a lot next to, let's just say Lincoln School, old Lincoln School, Giannona Jarvis School coming right down, heading towards Runley Field, heading, Heading North, Baltimore Government Hill, Heading North,

and the left-hand side. What's the status of that property?

2:55:20 At present, nothing has, to my knowledge, nothing has happened. There has not been funding or any funding to build a building on there. I do believe, as you've indicated previously, that there are many government buildings that are, I guess, dilapidated. I would I would ask and I would look to see if there is a building and if we can get funding to retrofit and renovate and rehabilitate any one of those buildings so that we can have our home of our own and we won't be paying this ex you know the rent that we're presently paying you know these days we enter land swapping and ding so perhaps you could swap the land for something with property and procurement but you have to have that conversation with them thank you and I will yeah that's that's a good thing to do because then we're swapping amongst ourselves so that works for us right well and swapping means that they would give us the deed to to that building okay yeah so if you could that's something I'm giving you some advice that you could look into thank you appreciate what you indicated okay oh we don't go to the next senator and That is Senator Joseph, Senator Joseph, you're recognized for your three minutes. Senator Joseph? Thank you. Yes, yes, my mic just came on. Thank you kindly.

2:56:49 A pleasant good afternoon everyone, congratulations. Tony Todman on your appointment, your appointment as interim. I'm sure you will do well in that position. I do have some follow-up questions based on the discussion at hand regarding the buildings. I did note that you mentioned in response that you are in the process of making repairs to the roof for the building that you own in St. Croix. Those repairs were caused by what?

2:57:29 Those damages that you have to, was that caused by any hurricanes? We had some repairs and I said we're going to be looking at making some additional repairs. The present repairs that we're working on and that we have the request for proposals on are in the interior of the office where all of the carpeting has remained since we had the hurricanes Irma and Maria. forward for fiscal year 2024 we look to do repairs on the roof i understand that we have some leaks in the roof okay but these weren't cars these were subsequent uh to the hurricanes that's what you're representing now uh you've had an opportunity to review the post audit report correct yes i have so I noted under other services and charges, specifically where it comes to professional services, you're looking at a sizable increase from what you expended in fiscal year 2022 to what you're projecting to expend in or you're requesting for fiscal year 2024.

2:58:42 in fiscal year 2023 one minute you have expected uh ten thousand dollars uh why is there a jump with that there is a professional services there is a jump in that because as you can see we have 22 murder cases on uh saint croix and i believe nine on on saint thomas if half even half of those trials those cases go to trial we'll expand the hundred thousand dollars and so this is a conservative 30 seconds we have requested um funds uh more funds previously but you know we have several cases that are steady headed to trial and though and that's why we requested a hundred thousand dollars and you think that'll be sufficient because this the fiscal year is going okay that's so those those trials you are anticipating is going to happen in fiscal year 2022 let's look at the rental land and building which i started off with time is this madam chair may i just wrap up with this one question is the 156 000 that you are looking at sufficient to cover those costs that you need to make in your st croix building for fiscal year 2024 as i noted you have expended 87 230 dollars in that specific line item for fiscal year 2023 as of april 30th of this year senator are you looking at the rental land building i'm looking at page four i'm looking at page four of the post audit report other services and charges when you see you have

3:00:44 eighty seven thousand dollars two hundred and thirty dollars is was expended as of april 30th and now you are projecting to have almost well 156 000 for fiscal year 2024. senator i believe you're looking at the rental uh the rent that we pay for the land for the building uh for our rent in uh st thomas so we've spent 87 000 in rent um as of april um 30th 2023 and and we're anticipating spending \$156,000, which may change after my discussion.

3:01:28 Yes, okay, all right, so this is your rental, just the whole rental of the buildings. Okay, thank you so much for that answer. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Joseph. senator francis jr recognized for your point of information i'll thank you very much madam chair quickly um attorneys um toddman can you help me to understand what happened in terms of your ascension to the interim chief did um chief joseph resign he got replaced or what what happened in less space attorney joseph resigned he resigned okay so so he's no longer with the i mean resigned from the chief position he no longer remains with with the public defender's office or what happened he resigned from the office of the territorial public defender he's no longer practicing law with the office of the territorial public defender very well thank you thank you very much i didn't know what was what was the occasion that allowed you to to remove this i just just interested in knowing what happened there thank you very much thank you senator Francis so earlier you noted that you have a case stemming all the way back from 2016 what district is in that case is in I believe that's in st.

3:02:53 Thomas and what type of case is it I'm not sure well we had one that was a murder case we have one they're all um uh complex litigation cases and um what is the movement on those cases well we are going to trial on uh some of our cases are you talking about those that stem back from 2016. we're going to trial on some of our cases we're trying to resolve our cases, but I cannot really discuss each individual case at this juncture based on attorney-client privilege.

- 3:03:35 Okay, no, I wasn't asking you to discuss the case. I'm just trying to figure out if these cases are moving forward. Well, Senator, you know, every day we work on our caseload. We go to court, we make motions, we argue motions, we get rulings from the court, we abide by the rulings we appeal those rulings all right senator Capehart does that get things you recognize for your three minutes Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon to all.
- 3:04:21 Good afternoon. Congratulations, Interim Chief. Don't get in trouble today about attorney-client privilege. We're not asking anything specific on these cases, but we do have some cases that are concerning as they're lagging behind. I wanted to ask about the building on St. Thomas. So this senator, for sure, would like to see this government move back into government-owned buildings. We're spending too much money. I understand how the economy works, but we're spending too much money fixing up our friends and family and everybody else's private buildings and leaving our government-owned facilities to fall apart.
- 3:05:19 What are we doing on St. Thomas to find a suitable home for the office of the public defender until it's officially changed? I see you have everybody already towing, going with this. I even see it up already on the screen office of the territorial public defender, but we're not going to go there. Well, Senator, I would appreciate any assistance that you can give us in finding a permanent home for us. So if you have any suggestions, I would really appreciate them. Having 12 days on the job, I am going to reach out to Property and Procurement, as has been suggested by the good Senator Fred Gregory. And I have, you know, my other staff trying to determine suitable home for us.
- 3:06:10 So that's my suggestion as well, the Department of Property and Procurement. Anybody in particular, sir? And you have two ABLE assistants on either end of you. One minute. And I'm sure could assist you in finding a suitable place on St. Thomas. Thank you. All right. Thank you. Best wishes. I'm looking forward to supporting your office. And, yes, I'll support your name change since it seems like you guys are really, for lack of a better way to say it, hell-bent on getting the name change to Territorial Public Defender.
- 3:06:42 But I'm looking forward to supporting all the entities that have... legislative I mean a law enforcement first responding or judicial piece to it so looking forward to supporting your entity as well thank you sir thank you and you thank you senator get in Senator DeGraff you're recognized for your three minutes thank you madam chair good afternoon colleagues good afternoon testifiers attorney Tadman welcome you and your staff see I could walking here at the end no paper because two main things I worried about the employees and what they're walking in so I heard you talk about roof and rugs and stuff for what employees got walk and they're walking in these conditions well we have some flooring that are rugs that got some damage and we fixed the areas that had the most damage unacceptable not to cut you off attorney but but unacceptable for me it's unacceptable no i i didn't hear the part about um you know i'm in wage increases and stuff and thing for your employees i know you're here for 12 days but here's where the blows will get thrown and you gotta take all of them so again for you coming in and looking at the wage increases the wages for your employees and stuff retention of attorneys doing a great job and a staff to support them yes what do you think about the wages and stuff for your employees we have I have been working with mr. morehead we could talk yeah if you don't mind get a little closer I want every our album to be able
- 3:08:28 to hear everything you're saying I am working with our fiscal accountant mr. Moorhead and we are reviewing all of the wages for all of our staffs not just those affected by the recent increase or the recent pay increase for assistant attorney generals the board and I will be meeting to discuss raises for our staff don't discuss it do it because I'm saying \$92,000 for a starting attorney doing the great work that are you doing unheard of maybe other people are gonna I know about it but that's my forte and you know why because I got 41 years in the government I've seen it all one minute but your employees you're the new kid on the block you're a novelty now bring the hammer down if you have to bring down the hammer I don't have a problem with that but pay them right and you're going to see the increase we're going to have um thank you sir for for the monies that you say you have and for do you have any um assessments made actually any contracts in place to fix the roof on the building uh these kind of things as yet 30 seconds we have the request for proposals that will be issued for the flooring in saint croix we have received bids for the offices in uh saint thomas and we hope to start the work right away okay and those florins were wet well they had or they're continuously getting wet but they're not continuously getting wet, but Mr. Moorhead can better tell you about the office in St. Coy.
- 3:10:01 No, just more for air quality, because carpet hold dust, and so we're trying to get away from the carpet to go to... Time. You didn't walk from home until they get fixed, or find some suitable answer, because I'm saying no. That's a backbone for this new attorney to shine, your staff, let's get it right. Thank you for the time, Madam Chair. Appreciate it. Thank you, Senator DeGraff, for your response, for your questions.
- 3:10:37 You said that you have two vacant attorney assistant, what do you call them, assistant, attorney, what do you call them, assistant, what's the title of your attorneys? Assistant Public Defenders, Territory Public Defenders. Assistant Public Defenders. You had two vacancies? And you're in the, correct? In St. Thomas. How many vacancies do you have? we

have four vacancies total four total and you have two that you are in the process of filling yes you have offers you're in the process of making offers or interviews we have persons that are starting senator we have so okay so you have persons that were since hired so now you're down to two well including my position then i guess it will be three so you're So you're down to two for now, right?

3:11:25 I'm down to four. And you're... No, we had seven vacancies, and we have two, we filled two positions. So you're down to four. You're down to four vacancies, and how long have these positions been vacant? The attorney positions, the two attorney positions became vacant at the end of March. One became at the end of March 2023, the two attorney positions in St. Thomas. And then the secretarial position in St. Croix became vacant July 7th. The attorney vacancy, I am not sure when that became, well, I believe when one of the attorneys became the magistrate judge. So let's just be clear. I'm asking specifically about vacant attorney positions. Okay. That's what I thought. So what's that total?

3:12:17 The vacant attorney positions will be four vacant attorney positions. And you're in the process of filling two. You already made offers and the people are about to start, correct? Correct. So that leaves you with two. Well, we had more vacancies, so attorneys.

3:12:55 We had more vacancies. Right now, we have one vacant position, attorney vacant position in St. Croix, and we have three vacant attorney positions in St. Thomas, not including the attorneys that are coming on board. And so then we would. What's the total? I need a total. Are you giving me this wrong? How wrong we go? What is the total? Four. Vacant positions? So you have four. One in St. Croix. You have one in, how much is St. Croix? One. One in St. Croix and three in St. Thomas? Yes. And that's not inclusive of the ones that are coming on? Correct. Correct. So in total, how many assistant public defenders do you have? You have ten.

3:13:49 Currently we have ten now and then two coming. Ten and two, that's twelve. And then you have an additional four. Right? So that's going to be sixteen. Okay. Correct? That's if everybody is correct. Right, so in total you have availability for 16 positions of assistant public defenders. Does that, the 16 positions, do they cover your needs? What is your workload?

3:14:25 What does that look like? It will cover our needs. I do believe in reviewing everything and I've spoken to the board about this. They do want us to have, at least on each district, a floater attorney that can assist in all the courtrooms because at present we have one attorney per courtroom and sometimes Sometimes we have very difficult cases and sometimes one attorney would leave their courtroom to help handle a trial and so we can have two attorneys depending on the difficulty of the trial.

3:15:10 So again, do you have sufficient attorneys? No, we do not. So ideally what would be considered sufficient? You have 16 positions for a vacant. If you were to hire all 16, does that cover your need or do you see a need for additional attorneys? I see a need for at least one additional attorney on each district. So that's two? Yes. All right. Senator Carreon, you recognize your point of information.

3:15:47 Along that same line, the Chair is asking, I'm inquiring about those that are ready to retired so how many attorneys you have that are within that range that can be tired or in the next fy 24 could retire i have not received any information from any of the attorneys indicating that they were about to retire based on the years of service and government that's i'm trying to figure out so those that fall within that category probably one on saint croix and none on St. Thomas okay all right so I know that you asked specifically for the name change and I also read that this is your 50th anniversary year of Office of the Public Defender yes. On what month? I think it was month. Do you know what month the creation took place? We can find out. So colleagues I know that we do resolutions. I I think it's appropriate for us to consider a resolution in support of the anniversary of the Office of the Public Defender.

3:17:17 So I believe it was the Senate President that made a reference to the fact that he has the bill draft. So while we add it, let's just make the resolution to honor and commend the Public Defender's office for serving the indigent in our community and those who are unable to afford a lawyer because it means that you know we continue to talk about the importance of justice being served so I believe that we have an obligation to do that okay colleagues I have exhausted my questions for the Office of the Public defender. I don't know if we have any other questions. Senator Carrion you may proceed with your burning question. Yes do you have anyone working from home virtually or everyone is in office and then I'm also getting information that you're doing face-to-face client representation or you still have some policy that your clients are not coming in. Well it all depends on actually the judge there's most of the judges presently depending on what the matter is I'm referring to your attorneys with your clients we have one attorney who is presently doing virtual all of the other attorneys are in the office and depending on the courtroom we either in person or it's virtual depending on the particular judge meeting with your clients your attorneys have to meet with your clients correct so we meet with them both ways whether in person or sometimes virtually okay we do both thank you all right thank you uh mrs smith-tudman we will

give you a 30 second close uh thank you uh good senators for the opportunity to present our fiscal year

3:19:18 2024 budget request. Our work is not for the faint of heart. We are dedicated and we are relentless in our work, even in the face of many criticisms by the people in our community and even persons in the highest levels of government. But let us not be sidetracked by hyperbole or by the instances of grief to strip our people of their essential rights.

3:19:57 And so I ask you to fund us at the level requested as we continue to work for the neediest in our community. Thank you. Thank you. That sounds like a... I was about to say the same thing. That sounds like an excellent closing argument. I believe that we rest, you rest, and we will contemplate and make a final decision and you will learn of our decision. Thank you.

3:20:32 Okay. The committee stands in recess for five minutes. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

3:22:45 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. I'm talking point. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. the committee on budget appropriations and finance is back on the record madam clerk can you please

3:33:12 Please read the final block into today's agenda, into the record. Block three, VI Labor Management Committee and VI Public Employees Relations Board, invited testifier, Ms. Yaira Tutain, Executive Director, VI Labor Management Committee, Mrs. Perini, Marina Jacobs-Felner, Chairperson, Virgin Islands Public Employees Relations Board. Madam Chair, that concludes block number three. Okay, just for clarification, let me see. The. Okay, so we do have the Executive Director of the Verzan Public Relations Board, correct? Yes, that's correct. Which is the appropriate person that should come to testify. You are the person that's responsible for the day-to-day operations? Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. that over the years we've seen that the the chair of the board is a person that comes to testify but it should be the executive director so thank you for being here and we have a note that Miss Yaira Tutain is not here I believe I saw her earlier. Put your name on the record before you respond. Please recognize the mic of the testifier. Try it again Mr. Gumbs. Good afternoon. Good afternoon Joseph

3:35:07 Gumbs. The mic, the mic. You know what that mic is not working. I remember that from earlier today I believe it got unplugged from under at the bottom yeah go ahead good afternoon Joseph a gums member Virgin Islands labor management committee yeah women's where's mr. time miss two time had to catch a flight back to st. Thomas she had hope appear the former director mr. Aubrey Lee has passed he passed on the 16th and his celebration of life ceremony is going to be on the 29th of July so they had some things she had to do in regards to that so she couldn't stay um i would like for you to please text her and let her know if this meeting is continuing well she when she gets to saint thomas she needs to make herself her way to the chambers in st thomas please thank you very much also just to let you know she was trying to do that to testify from st thomas but she said there was some reason why they said she couldn't do it well i don't know what that reason would be i don't have an issue with that okay all right good so let's see if we can work out and then we're going to proceed so um i'm going to ask the representatives from the Virgin Islands Public Relations Employees Relations Board to please put their names and titles on the record and we're going to start with the executive director. Good afternoon. I am running this meeting and And I'm going to ask the executive director to please put her name and her title on the record. Good afternoon.

3:37:03 Nicole Samuel-Miller, executive director of the Public Employees Relations Board. Thank you. You may proceed. Good day, Honorable Senator. No, no, no. Please put your name and title. My name is Annie Day-Henry, and I'm a board member, and I'm sitting here on behalf of Parina Fellman. Felman. No problem. Esther Felix Donnelly, Chief Financial Officer. Thank you. Sonia Neal, Legal Assistant. Thank you. And Mr. Jacobs? Mr. Gumbs, VA Labor Management Committee. Please put your name and title on the record again for us, please.

3:37:53 Good afternoon, Joseph A. Gumbs, VILMC member. All right, so you're a member of the board, correct? Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you. All right, so who speaks to the testimony for the Virgin Islands Public Employees Relations Board? Ms. Nicole Samuel-Miller, you're providing the testimony. I think both the board and myself has testimony.

3:38:31 You will proceed with your testimony. Good afternoon, Honorable Chair of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance, Senator Donna Fred Gregory, members of the Committee on Finance, Senators of the 35th Legislature, the viewing and listening audience. My name is Nicole Samuel Miller, the Executive Director of the Public Employees Relations Board.

3:39:07 The PERB is comprised of the chairman and four board members. Unfortunately, our organization recently lost one of our beloved founding members, Mr. Aubrey Lee. As we prepare to pay our respects at his upcoming memorial service, we want to publicly extend our condolences to his family, loved ones and colleagues, as his presence will be an immense void within our halls and chambers.

- 3:39:39 In addition to our board members, we currently employ nine staff members on St. Croix and two on St. Thomas. I would like to recognize these diligent and hardworking employees of the PERB who continue to go above and beyond to serve the men and women in our community. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. We thank you for all that you do, and those board members and employees who are on medical leave, we pray for their speedy recovery. As a quasi-judicial entity, the PERB staff continues to maintain their certifications and licensures as well as complete requisite courses on an annual basis to serve as hearing officials and mediators on labor related matters. Our agency has also entered into agreements with Judge Henry Carr and Attorney Henry Smock to serve as hearing officers.
- 3:40:50 As part of our restructuring and to begin to afford our employees an opportunity to develop their skills and talents, we are proud to announce that our legal assistant and certified paralegal Ms. Sonia Neal has begun training to become a hearing officer through the National Association of Hearing Officers. This will allow us to hear more matters at the perv and decrease our caseload. Two of our board members have also stepped up to the plate to ensure that there is a continuity of service by serving as hearing officers as needed.
- 3:41:32 Thus far, a total of 13 board meetings have been conducted. Some additional accomplishments are as follows. We were successful in hiring a scanning archivist, which have allowed us to store files electronically. Our staff members have participated in online webinars with the National Association of Hearing Officers. Through the American Bar Association, we have also participated in the Equal Employment Opportunity Law Conference and trained with the labor law and labor arbitration training, as well as receive certification through the Labor and Employment Relations Association. Our laws are constantly changing and the impact of COVID has changed workplace employment, policies, procedures and laws. Therefore, ongoing training and development ensures that decision makers are always apprised of these changes and the rights of our employees are not violated.
- 3:42:49 Let's take a look at our caseload statistics. To date, a total of 25 cases have been filed and 38 cases have been closed. We have 98 cases that are still pending, 34 cases are pending at the Superior Court, and 45 arbitration panels have been issued. There has not been any appeals forwarded to mediation.
- 3:43:24 A breakdown of our 2024 fiscal year budget request is as follows. All services account for a total of \$805,020. Fringe benefits total \$339,241. Supplies total \$28,226. Other services and charges total \$307,822. And our utilities total \$16,600. Public Employees Relations Board is in a transformational phase.
- 3:44:10 In an effort to transform the PERB for fiscal year 2024 and beyond, it is imperative that we request an additional \$300,000 to restructure our agency and bring us up to par with our sister agencies nationwide. Compared to when the PERB was first organized in 1980, there are indeed more government employees and more unions in which we interact. Therefore, there is a direct need to employ additional personnel. This This brings the grand total of what we are requesting to \$1,796,909. A breakdown of this amount is included in our budget book.
- 3:45:04 A few of our anticipated plans for fiscal year 2024 include remaining committed to addressing all pending appeals in a timely manner. We also expect to hire an additional attorney to reduce and maintain our caseload as well as hire an additional court reporter in the St. Croix district. We also aim to create an online docket system to update and provide access to the public on PERB matters. In summary, the PIRB will continue to meet its statutory duties within its budgetary constraints as it relates to managing its caseloads throughout fiscal year 2024. In closing, the PIRB understands the role we play and how integral the decisions we make affect the lives of the government employees who walk through our doors and seek our assistance on a daily basis. We remain steadfast and committed to bringing resolve and to ensuring that all matters are rectified in a timely manner. We thank you for this opportunity and humbly request your approval for our requested budget. We stand ready and available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your testimony.
- 3:46:31 I note that there is a testimony also from the chair of the board, but the testimony basically asks for the same thing. So I am going to ask my colleagues to review that document, but there's no need for us to hear the act that created PERB and all of that good stuff.
- 3:47:06 We received a request from, is it Mrs. or Ms. Mrs. Mrs. Nicole Miller, a budget of \$1.496,909 plus and ask of an additional 300,000 so we are not going to be redundant this afternoon. I do want to ask though that we take a moment of silence for the passing of Mr. Aubrey Lee. He has given much of his self to the people of the Virgin Islands so colleagues if you can please stand for a moment of silence for Mr. Lee.
- 3:48:04 Thank you. And we will proceed with Mr. Joseph Gumbs. Mr. Gumbs, you are providing the testimony this afternoon for the Labor Management Committee. That's correct, Madam Chair. You may proceed. Good afternoon, Madam Chair, Honorable Donna Fred Gregory, other honorable senators, distinguished testifiers, colleagues, members of the listening and viewing audience. I am Joseph Gumbs, a member of the Labor Management Committee. Respectfully, I accept the

invitation or the testimony before your committee today.

- 3:48:47 Management union cooperation and concept is finding at least one thing in common that union and management can work on together, seeking ways to accomplish a goal jointly. has a responsibility in its mission, and the union has a responsibility to represent the workers' interests. Management union cooperation is not an absence of conflict. All organizations and interpersonal relations experience some degree of conflict. is healthy because conflict brings out divergent opinions and perspectives. The question is the degree of conflict and how it is handled. Cooperation does not always guarantee good results.
- 3:49:48 It is not always possible. We have held workshops on both St. Thomas, St. John, Districts, and St. Croix. Managers, supervisors, and labor relations correspondents were sent out to all 26 agency heads and HR. A total of 12 agencies attended and three unions. All responses from the attendees were positive and are looking forward to having more training we reconnected with the federal mediation council services fmcs and we are in the process of preparing for several workshops to be conducted in september physical year 2024 the vi labor management committee operations goals and objectives To assist in creating, maintaining working conditions and government agencies which are fulfilling by providing healthy work environment.
- 3:51:00 To create opportunities for employees and contributions in decision making. To develop programs designed to improve communications on all levels and government agencies to improve the quality of performance at all levels. to enhance productivity at all levels, and to establish a continuing education of labor management relations for labor and management. To identify and seek to resolve problems and issues that affect the agency labor management relationships.
- 3:51:40 Monthly newsletters called The Motivator is to establish and disseminate to individuals within the agencies. It is aimed at focusing attention on labor management relationships in the public sector. To network with agencies' divisions on St. John to determine their interests and having workshops at their locale. Objectives and strategies.
- 3:52:14 The agency's labor management committee meetings and workshops focus on subjects which permit the parties to work together in a non-adversarial atmosphere, thereby producing an improvement in labor relations. These forums provide a structure for problem solving through the sharing of information and ideas focused on defining issues and resolving problems. The forums are also effectively used to group development of leadership skills, discouraging non-productive behaviors of parties in contract administration, managing conflicts in a constructive manner and relieving tensions of the parties. The existence of many issues between management and labor in the workplace are often a sign of underlying problems not being addressed in an effective manner.
- 3:53:19 The underlying problems may not have been identified nor addressed and therefore left unresolved. The issue raised are an attempt by employees to send a message that there is a growing dissatisfaction with management's actions or inactions. Labor management relationships can be identified as being in conflict and resistance or in accommodation, restraint or in accommodation. When in conflict, management does not accept the union. They do not yield until they literally have to. Under restraint, the parties accept each other but exercise relative strength to win so that they have a win-some-lose-some approach. that accommodations are willing to compromise whenever possible or conciliate whenever necessary. First-line supervisors face the task of confronting workplace issues with public with policies supplied by management at the higher level. The union counterpart at this level is the shop steward. Accommodation will not exist between supervisors and shop stewards if conflicts or restraint is prevalent between the agency head and the union.
- 3:54:51 The VI Labor Management Committee is in a position to direct the signals of poor labor management relationships and other remedies, trainings, and facilitations to address the nature of the problems behind the relationship. We ask this body to continue to support the Labor Management Committee. I would like to thank the members of the 35th Legislature for the opportunity to make this presentation on behalf of the VI Labor Management Committee. We ask that you take the budget request of \$200,000 into consideration to continue providing our services to the agencies. Thank you very much.
- 3:55:42 Thank you, Mr. Gumbs, and we're going to get right into the questions. Colleagues, we're going to go to a four-minute round, I think we can do that. But let me just start with page 13 of the testimony of PIRB. I need some clarification on the caseload statistics. So the numbers seem a little confusing.
- 3:56:18 I think I know what it is, but we need clarification. So you have the total number of cases filed to date is 25. Correct. However, you have that the cases closed is 38. So number of cases filed to date, that would be in fiscal year 2023, correct? That's correct, Senator. Okay, so that's in FY2023, and then you closed 38 cases in 2023 as well. That's correct.
- 3:56:47 And you have 98 cases pending from 2023 or prior to 2023? Prior to 2023. So you have 98 cases pending, so the 25, the 98 is inclusive of that 25 number? That's correct. Okay. So it's 2023 and prior is your pending cases. Yes. And you have 34 cases pending at the Secure Court, which is inclusive of 23 and prior. Correct? That's correct. And in FY23, you issued 45 arbitration panels.

- 3:57:28 Yes, Senator. And none of your appeals, did you have any appeals in 2023? Or is it that none of them were forwarded for mediation? None of them were forwarded for mediation. But decisions were made as to why the appeals did not move one way or the other. That's correct. Okay. All right. So I think we are clear on that.
- 3:57:57 And did you provide information with regards to your bank accounts? Esther Felix Donnelly, CFO. Yes we did. Okay. So we have information regarding your current bank accounts. We did, but I noticed that it's not included in your post audit report. Okay, we can get it from post audit. I just need to make sure that it was in fact submitted. All right.
- 3:58:29 Colleagues, we're going to go to a four-minute round. And we're going to start with those that have stayed in the paint with me will be Senator Carrion. You're recognized for your four-minute, Senator. Thank you, Madam Chair. and good afternoon to representatives of both groups uh quickly i see that uh perb has had 13 board meetings right that's correct senator is there a cost associated with those board meetings and where will i find that within your budget presentation um the board members are allotted a per diem every time they meet to conduct what's that per what's that per diem so what's the cost associated when uh you you must have those numbers right if you have 13 meetings uh full board complemented what was that cost and then you also have some expenses maybe food or anything like that is that also covered um first of all the board members get 75 dollars every time they meet or conduct per business. As of per diem to the end of June for all board members that gets the per diem we expended a total of 33,150 okay and is that a standard 13 board meetings in a year what's your standard yearly meetings there's no
- 4:00:21 standard amount but we did yeah we did exceed what we did previously so if you exceed previously then there is like an average because how you're measuring that you exceeded in prior well previously in the prior year yeah we exceeded that amount so what's what's that amount previously um about four 2022 was i think probably four or five four or five was that uh because of COVID, or that's usually the amount of meetings you guys regularly have?
- 4:01:01 Quickly, because my time is... Sorry, Senator, based on my research, because I just came on board in April, the amount of meetings that were held last fiscal year, COVID did impact the number of meetings that were held. However, there has been an increase because we have been working diligently to move the cases along, so therefore we have been meeting. Very well. When they are in arbitration, is there a cost associated with that?
- 4:01:38 Could you repeat that, Senator? The cases that you have pending, so when they go to the Superior Court, there's a cost associated with that. you have 34 pending in the superior court one minute just trying to figure out because I know you have professional services here registered and do the amount that you have requested is now a lot so I'm wondering what's the process Sonia Neal legal assistant the superior court fees there for the contracted attorneys that deals with those okay and for FY22 how much did you expand in contracted attorneys 30 seconds 2022 I don't have that information with you We have actions for 2023.
- 4:02:27 For 2023, um... That would be, and that would be out of other services and charges? Correct. It comes under the other services category. Time. it's about \$30,000 also okay and that list was provided to for professional services to this committee through the chair yes we submitted information for it yes thank you thank you very much madam chair thank you senator carry on so let's go back to the pending cases how old is your was a range From what I can ascertain, currently our oldest case is 2014 or 2016, I may be mixing it up.
- 4:03:33 Is there a, and this is not a case that's pending in a superior court, this is a case that's before you from 2015 or 16. So what is the strategic plan or what are you all doing to address these old cases? Because at the end of the day, you're impacting people's livelihood, their income, their ability to pay their mortgages. I know I was one of them. So tell me.
- 4:04:07 We have reviewed, I have met with the legal team most recently to devise a plan. I can say that we looked at our cases and we looked at what needs to be pushed out. In the upcoming weeks, there are between 17 and 21 decisions and orders that will be able to go out shortly. Unfortunately, our legal counsel had to leave Ireland for unforeseen medical reasons. We're hoping that she does have a speedy recovery.
- 4:04:45 In the meantime, we may have to solicit the service of another legal counsel to help move these cases along. So if your legal counsel is out for medical reasons, when is that decision going to be made? And like I said, you are impacting, you know, these decisions are impacting the lives of individuals. So. I agree with you, Senator. How long has this been going on? This is most recently. Since I've come on board, she has been ailing.
- 4:05:28 How long has she been gone? Well, off island now. This is going to be a week. Gone away from the office. Yes. Yes. So how long ago you said? She's now gone a week, but intermittently she has been, yes. Okay, so the board and yourself, you all have to make a decision because we know that these things happen, and I wish her well and hope that she gets better, because when I didn't see her hair, that was one of the first things I asked you. So one of the things I need you to provide us is you said that you have a number of cases that's before the court um we would like to get a listing of that information and how many cases do you hear per month on average have our legal assistant answer it varies on how

many cases we hear per month right Now we have, let me see, I believe we have, for August we have, we have 10 cases scheduled for August and it goes into.

4:06:50 know that we're talking about August let's go back let's talk about June and let's talk about me how many cases did you hear me how many cases did you hear in June I do not have the amount for May and June at this time but I believe we did probably eight cases in May and maybe six in June and those cases are vacated no they are not some of them are continued because of the the parties they're not available let me tell you I asked a question I asked a question because the executive director mrs. Miller indicated that she has 21 cases that between 17 and 21 cases decisions and orders that can be where decisions will be rendered so that mean that you're waiting for the board to render decision the decision or the decisions are already rendered are you waiting to push them out they are also in need of our legal counsel to you know to complete them so that they can be sent to the board for closeout. So a decision needs to be made with regards to whether or not you're going to seek outside legal services because you don't have an attorney and you don't know when your attorney will be returning. All right, Senator... Oh, Blyden, I miss you. Well, Senator Blyden, you recognize. I don't know why I went all over to the bottom of the sheet. I miss Senator DeGraf. I miss everybody. I apologize. Senator Blyden, it's been a long day. You recognize for your four minutes. No problem. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

4:08:35 Good afternoon, Senator, and all other testifiers, and thank you so much for your testimonies. I, too, would like to personally give my condolences to Mr. Lee. You know, he was a true public servant, and he served for many years, and may his soul rest in eternal peace. First, let me go to the Virgin Islands Labor Management Committee. it's a gum I know the governor governor requested a budget of 188 899 but in your testimony heard you said two hundred thousand dollars because a thousand okay what the difference for I want that money be used for which area of arm the agency would be with that money use well the concentration will be on training that's what we're trying to improve training I I also said that we have joined up with the federal, our federal counterpart, and they're also going to be assisting us in bringing in more training.

4:09:45 We feel that the better trained, especially when it comes to the managers, there will be less conflict with the unions, which will reduce the PIRB workload, because then they won't have to deal with so many filing of cases. We also need your assistance in having these different agencies set up their LMC's. Unlike when Senator Francis was with VIPV, he made sure that that was covered, that they had an LMC set up so this way it resolved a lot of our issues that we were having. Okay, very well. So you basically saying most of the funds will go toward training in terms of management?

4:10:30 management and union to it's okay okay very well um ED Miller you also spoke in testimony to some additional three hundred thousand dollars that's correct exactly um what would this true enough are not be used for speak to that the three hundred thousand dollars as have already been expressed here today we are desperately in need of an additional legal counsel, so we need to onboard another attorney, as well as another court reporter, and it also includes fringe benefits. Okay, you know, you spoke to restructuring and developing skills. Speak to that. What would that look like? For instance, during my testimony, I I spoke about us having to enter agreements with outside individuals to render services as hearing officials.

4:11:36 However, if we look within ourselves in PERB, if we help our current employees to ascertain those or to gain those skills, then we will not have to look outside and that will help to decrease some of the costs. very well that's a good way to go um the professional service contracts um you have several contracts that that you have had for some time uh 30 seconds when when do they expire i will have our cfo answer that question sir professional services contract that we have for Ms. Maynard is an annual contract.

4:12:19 To the end of the year. Exactly. And everything is up to date? Yes. No outstanding issues? Excuse me? No outstanding issues? No, sir. Okay. Very well. Again, thank you for your response to that, Madam Chair. I thank you so much for the time. Thank you, Senator Blighton. I'm going to ask that you provide the listing of the cases that you heard in June and, April, May and June, for the past few months, prior to now, April, May and June, okay? Who's next? Senator DeGraff, you're recognized for your four minutes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon colleagues. afternoon testifiers, all of you listening and present. I see for the PERB, Executive Director, you just came on? Because I know that. That is correct. When? When exactly? April 24th. April. Okay, so this information from the post-added report, now for \$300,000, how many employees do you have?

4:13:42 We have nine in St. Croix, two in St. Thomas. Okay, 11 total. You were here all the time. You went through the ranks, so you were in the department or you came from outside the department? I came from outside. However, this is my, September will be my 31st year of public service to the government. Okay, excellent, excellent. Okay, so then you have made an assessment in terms of, again, wages, when last, have they had wage increases? When are they due? Have you made that assessment? Correct. We have been looking at that as well with the board. I think the last time, If I'm not, it's 2023.

- 4:14:18 2023? That's correct. Okay, this year? January? Effective October 1st. October 1st? Yes. Okay, for the 2023 budget. It's going to be 2023. Okay, and do you know, again, Executive Director, when they do again for another wage increase? Again, I can't answer that question right now. However, we have to look at performance. We also have to look at our budget and what we are permitted to. So these are your standards or these are the standards that the employees know? These are standards of the employees. Okay, good. Of course. Okay, and I saw with your leases, the leases said subject to an annual 4% increase beginning July 1, 2024.
- 4:15:06 Is that increase factored into this budget? Yes, it is. Okay. Okay. Now, was there, okay, so now, and then you have a landlord provided a 12% reduction. How much is that in dollar figures? Okay, and also then for the facilities that the employees work in. um i know you're renting are these facilities all um is a collaboration with the the landlord to make a any adjustments to the facilities are they uh facilities worthy of having your employees work in them um yes senator um we are able to readily call the landlord if there is an issue and they respond expeditiously okay and i guess why is she checking uh yes go ahead one minute yes the total savings for the year would be six thousand eight hundred eighty six thousand eight hundred eighty eight hundred and sixty nine dollars per month okay so we have a savings of six thousand and then every year we pay a four percent on the rent the focus percent is the st. Thomas landlord the 12 percent is the st. Croix landlord st. Croix landlord reduced 12 percent yes st. Thomas landlord from 2024 will add four percent we get into light first 2024 okay so then that's even you could take and put to us is it something you're doing that way or what do you do with the savings the 12 year that
- 4:17:03 12 percent. Presently we utilize it other services to pay the vendors. You have \$6,800 that you got back time as a savings so you have that now going into 2024. No it's no our budget is a lump sum some budget right as a result if we don't use monies in one category we reappropriate it to another category we we don't we don't realize okay and you're able to do that okay okay okay and finally mr mr gums um again we're both of you thank you for the server that you provide and uh again like my colleague was asking for the 200,000 how many employees do you have we have two full-time employees and one part-time okay okay two full-time employees will be the director Gita to time and Angela Boynes that was assistant and the part-time employee is the janitorial custodial staff okay all right thank you thank you madam chair all right thank you senator the graph um mr gums i don't know if i missed it but i think you're you have a part-time your admin person is part-time no the administrative assistance which is miss boyne she's a full-time person the part-time person is the custodian we have a custodial worker that's part-time so you have a full-time executive director uh seventy thousand dollars per annum
- 4:18:56 okay seventy thousand okay all right thank you um Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to everyone from the VA Labor Management Committee as well as from the PERB. First of all, I'd like to offer my condolences to Mr. Arbery Lee as well as Hugo Dennis, junior certainly mr lee has contributed significantly to the government of the virgin house i've had the opportunity for over 20 plus years for working with mr lee and know of his loyalty his commitment uh to public service and more importantly to the virgin house labor management committee in his effort to really try to address that throughout government hence i wanted to ask um lieutenant gums um what's he oh captain will you it was your last rank you didn't promote me before you left i wonder why i guess you could always correct that i wonder why so um lieutenant gums in respect to um labor management committee because i found that to be extremely effective over the years and being able to resolve some of the issues that confront labor and management what is the difficulty that you're experiencing most recently with getting those up and running it's the cooperation of the department heads we find that the unions are willing because they're the ones that are suffering the most so they're willing to participate but some of the union heads they don't have that foresight like you had to avoid confrontation so they're not motivated to make it a priority so we're really reaching out hopefully that you know the senators here could when they bring these department these department heads come in front of them they can let them know that hey this is something that's important and they need to cooperate that's that's critical i certainly um embrace that um ed miller congratulations on your assignment i don't know if it's gonna be an easy one but certainly congratulations to you on that
- 4:21:12 and i hope that you endeavor to do everything possible to address some of the issues i wanted to ask you have you number one what have been the number of filings from january to current or up until perhaps june what has been a number of filings the number that i have is a for the fiscal year it's 25. 25 and out of that 25 what have been done with the what how have those 25 been disposed of some have been closed out they were um some are very um easy to close out others um because as our legal assistant said because of the parties and they can't come to a mutual agreement some um are in continuance and have you seen any particular trend or commonality in terms of your violence um that you have seen but there seem to be ebbs and flows as to how the cases come into the perv um there's a certain time of the year where there seems to be a calm and then um we're seeing more now as this as we get into the um the school year and august is approaching then we're seeing more cases come in any particular pattern of complaints are you seeing one more than the other any any particular pattern they're observing mostly what we're seeing um right now is discrimination okay

can you um dive down a little bit different discrimination against what um it could be discrimination in house uh sexual harassment those are filed with us as discrimination um cases 531 cases okay and what is the average turnaround time for such complaints if it's a 531 it it they all they're heard according to how how they come into the PERB because those that are pending has to go out before those are heard. So their pre-hearing conference is held and then a date is chosen for hearing at that

4:23:16 time. Madam Chair, may I conclude? So how many government employees that you have currently out pending a decision from the PERB? Senator, we can get that information to you. we don't have it readily on hand. Okay. Please, to the chair, I think that that's critical to determine because, again, it drives the importance of being able to have finality or at least disposition because we have employees that are out there in limbo until a final decision is made, so that's very crucial to me. I guess that's it outside of the, oh, what about unfair labor practice complaints? How many of those have you seen?

4:24:03 We've seen a few of them come in this year. Not quite, it's not that many, it's mostly 530s or 531s. Okay, very well. And KPIs, key performance indicators, are you, how are you measuring your effectiveness or you're setting your goals for future progress? As I have just come into the PIRB, I am currently doing overall assessment, looking at our finances, looking at our performance, our functionality, looking at just duties of employees just to see how we can rebrand and restructure.

4:24:51 We cannot continue to operate as though this is 1980, so some changes will be forthcoming for the PIRB. Very well. Thank you very much. I think that it's important for the public to understand and also for you to understand as well that it's very, very important that these cases are thoroughly followed up on and disposition is made because we have government employees that's just out there in limbo as well as managers and departments that's impacted. And worst of all, we have other individuals that are sitting and watching what's happening there in terms of the pending results. Thank you very much for the time, Madam Chair. Thank you, Senator Francis.

4:25:41 Mr. Gumbs, do you have the information on your annual expenses? Is the information that we have in a post-edit report? Does not flesh that out to give us the information that we need? No, I do not, but I spoke with the executive director, and she stated that any other information that you might need, that we could get that to you.

4:26:10 So I would take your concerns and she could forward that to you. We need to know what fringe benefits are. Because you have a labor relations officer at \$25,000, an administrative assistant at \$35,000, and a part-time custodial at \$8,000. So we need to know what your fringe benefits are for the labor management committee, and what your annual expenses are. your rental and it seems that you have some contractual expenses ADT as well as your utility expenses so we need to get that information so we could determine whether or not the budget that you have before us is sufficient or in excess of do you have bank accounts no we do not so your transactions are processed do you do I think you receive a lump sum budget though yes yes we do excuse me we do have a checking account that's correct we do have a checking Okay, so we're going to, Mr. Paul Salata, did we receive bank information from the Labor Management Committee?

4:27:47 No, we did not. Okay, so we also are going to need the banking information from the Labor Management Committee to determine whether or not we've been giving you sufficient funding, and do you collect revenues? Yes, we do. Okay, so we're also going to need that. We need to know what revenues you collect, for what purpose, and what's the balance in your revenue accounts. Okay, and we did see the, I'm going to ask the post editor to please provide the bank amount information on the drive so the senators could have an idea as to what the bank balance was as of, I believe it was April, for PERB.

4:29:01 Need to make sure. I am still not clear on the request for the 300,000. How much money did you spend in training PERB for FY2023 thus far, and how much money do you intend to spend on training for this year? Training, travel, et cetera. And that's inclusive of the staff and board members. As of June 26, 2023 total training expenses totaled \$10,050 and we have said travel also right? We have a total here of 68,160.

4:30:16 Say that again? 68,160. How much thousand? 68. Like 68 or 6,000? 68, which is inclusive of tickets to travel to St. Thomas. No, but I need a number. 68,68,160. \$68,000. Yes. \$68,000. \$160,000. All right. So that's the travel for how many months of fiscal year 2023? This is nine months. But it also includes tickets, travel. I understand. I am very clear on that. So in all, you've spent \$78,000 in associated travel expenses for this fiscal year. Are you all hearing this?

4:31:16 Are you all with me? All right. Okay. I'm going to ask the Public Employees Relations Board to send us the updated breakdown of It's 2023 expenses, and this 68, 160, or this total 78, is this inclusive of employees or just board members? It's inclusive of everyone.

- 4:31:49 Is this inclusive of your retreat? Is there a retreat that's included in this? No, there's not. Okay, so did you have a retreat for 2023? No, we haven't. Are you planning a retreat for 2023? We had a retreat that did not require any cost because we don't have any money for that. Okay. I can't see how you don't have money when you spend \$78,000 for travel already. Okay. Yes, we had a retreat about two weeks ago.
- 4:32:22 Okay. All right. Let me make sure that I've circled the wagon, colleagues. Y'all have any other questions while I try to find the rest of mine before we wrap up? Senator DeGraff? Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have one question. What are your actual numbers now that you have remaining for 23 from your lump sum budget?
- 4:32:55 What are your remaining numbers now, your actual personal fringe, you know, other services and everything, what do you have left right now from the lump sum? As of June 26th, 2023, we expended \$1,126,439. \$1,126,439. \$1,126,439. How much is that left from your 23 budget?
- 4:33:27 \$370,000. Okay, \$370,000? Yeah. Okay. Okay, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Anybody else? Mr. President? Senator Blayden? You may proceed, Senator Blayden. Let me ask. Ms. Miller, you spoke to bringing the agency agency, up to par with other agencies nationwide, that's where you want to restructure. How does that look, though?
- 4:34:05 First off, to begin with, no one knows about PIRB until you find yourself with an issue and you have to come to PIRB. Our government agencies, our employees, need to know what the PERB does and how we serve our employees. With that in mind, the matters that come before PERB are public matter. We are looking to, just as a court system, to create an online docket system that will be online, that will make the PERB more visible, give individuals information, they will know how to not only what they have to come to the perp but they can file cases online we just need to move out of that antiquated way of doing things and make ourselves more 21st century you said they need to employ additional personnel how many personnel and what type of positions are you speaking to so the two individuals who are we are in desperate need of onboarding is a legal counsel, a lawyer, and a court reporter, and I think that has contributed to our backlog of cases because we have two individuals and the strain is tremendous. We have one court reporter who has to fly between St. Croix and St. Thomas. She has to transcribe all of those notes. We definitely need another court reporter. And as we are now facing, we have our legal counsel who is attending to medical issues if we had another attorney in-house that will allow us to continue to serve.
- 4:35:54 Thank you for that clarification. It's a little bit more clear now. Thank you. Thank you, Manatee. Senator Francis. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. What is your breakdown for utilities? What are you spending on utilities? Utilities is just electricity and water. Utilities to date, to June 26th again, electricity we expended \$9,386.10, and for water we expended \$453.04. That is of June, so we need to upgrade, update that.
- 4:36:42 What about, are you guided by policies and procedures, or what is your, do you have a strategic plan, or how are you guided? That is something that the board, we're looking to revisit. We do have our policies and procedures manual, however, as I stated before, that's something that we are going to look at and try to make some necessary changes to. Very well. And do you have any pending litigations, any judgment litigations against the PIRB or the Labor Management Committee?
- 4:37:17 Not to my knowledge. No, Senator. Madam Legal. The only case it would be in Superior Court where the PIRB has to be named a party if they're appealing their decisions and orders. Okay. What about the Labor Management Committee? Have there been any litigations, judgments, or anything pending against the Labor Management Committee? No, Senator. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the time. All right. Thank you. Mrs. Miller, you noted that government employees are not aware of PIRB until they find themselves in a situation, but I believe that PIRB does have a responsibility to provide all government employees with information as it relates to their, let's use the word, rights, if you will. Correct. How are you communicating with the HR managers of the respective departments and agencies in order to make sure that there is some sort of information that's being channeled up or down, if you will, to the employees? Correct. That's something that I ·· thank you for that question because that's something that I also looked into. And I think as, you know, the entity that we are, we have a responsibility and I know that in the past we have worked with the Labour Management Committee, but I think we need to sort of rebrand somewhat and make ourselves visible to other agencies here in the territory so that they know what we're about, know what, you know, just things such as grievance mediation, things such as letting them know about the due process.
- 4:39:00 So we're looking at hosting trainings for managers within the different agencies throughout the government. So that's something to look forward from the PERP. Thank you. Sorry about that. Thank you. And Mr. Gumbs, just give us an idea as to some of the work that the Labor Management Committee has done just in this fiscal year. We reached out to different agencies to help them set up their LMC's, we provided trainings for both management and for unions in regards to labor relations, grievances, and so forth.

- 4:39:47 So you are actively working with all departments and agencies within the government? We have reached out to all of them. going to also try to expand into some private sectors but again we've been having that difficulty of getting cooperation from the department heads while they might say yes we're interested the coming forward to cooperating and getting it set up has been a little difficult so you're not setting up actual training opportunities and then sending out notices saying these opportunities are available yes we are we also have sent them to the legislature so we will also like you guys to participate no no no let me talk about departments and agencies the labor management committee aim for we it's for the government agencies okay it's tied to working with the unions etc so the question is have you sent out notices yes we have madam for training so when is your next training coming up and what is that training or what trainings have you have you we have one coming up in in september i told you we're partnering with the uh federal mediation council services so we're gonna have two in september uh we have something planned in august and we're trying to add on more so so you and you send out notices to the department so they could send the HL?
- 4:41:18 Yes, we do. We notify them that we're having trainings and to participate. Okay. And have you been getting participation? I think you're saying social. Yeah, we get some participation, but we would like more. Okay. All right. I don't believe I have any other questions. You have the information that we're requesting that you need to send back to the committee. Mrs. Miller and Mr. Grimes? Yes, that's the need to double-check to make sure. You said you needed the... We'll send you a letter. Okay, excellent.
- 4:41:56 Okay. We'll send you a letter. So we're going to need some details on this \$307,822 from the request, We need a break down on that, that needs to be clear for us. And I don't think I have anything else, so Mrs. Samuel Miller will allow you a 30 second close. Thank you, Senator. I want to thank this committee and members of this body for the opportunity to present our budget and to convey the needs of the PERB.
- 4:42:42 We know that hearing and resolving the matters that come before us is the heartbeat of what we do and how deeply it impacts the livelihood of affected government employees as they wait for decisions to be made. As we work to address these challenges, I ask the community for their continued understanding and patience as we work to implement the necessary changes to serve the people of these Virgin islands thank you uh mr gums again thank you for the opportunity to do this presentation uh we're looking forward in your support because we need the support in order to provide the services to the different agencies in this community also uh we're going to have a celebration for mr lee's life and that will be at turnbull funeral home and it will be on the 29th at 10 a.m st thomas okay thank you for that and we will make every effort to be there uh uh it's friday it's friday correct Yes, so we have a lot to do on Friday.
- 4:44:10 Mrs. Miller, I note that you, and I actually was closing, but I have to add this because I forgot. You said that you're looking for a court reporter. You would like us to consider increasing your budget for a court reporter, but you know that there are challenges across the territory with court reporters so I urge you to look into the way you call it record and transcribe there's a system that you could look at I think it's actually cheaper and it's more realistic based on the times that we're in right now okay thank you that's something that you can look into colleagues I believe we've exhausted all of our questions we We want to thank the testifiers who are here with us this afternoon or this evening. We do have more meetings tomorrow as we continue to push forward with the information for our 2024 budget. The Committee on Budget Appropriations and Finance is hereby adjourned.
- 4:45:21 We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.

People named in this transcript

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

- 7x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Joseph
- 7x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: DeGraf, DeGraff
- 7x **Senator Marvin Blyden**
heard in this transcript as: Blayden, Blyden, Blyton
- 7x **Senator Novelle Francis**

heard in this transcript as: Francis

7x **Senator Samuel Carrion**
heard in this transcript as: Carreon, Carrion

6x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James

4x **Senator Angel L. Bulkes Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bulkes Jr., Bulkas, Bulkes

4x **Commissioner Carla Benjamin**

3x **Senator Diane T. Capeheart**
heard in this transcript as: Capehart

3x **Senator Franklin D. Johnson**
heard in this transcript as: Johnson

3x **Senator Fred Gregory**
the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Fred Gregory; Frank Gregory; Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
heard in this transcript as: Gregory

3x **Senator Marvin A. Blighton**
heard in this transcript as: Blighton

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

2x **Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Fred Gregory, Donna Fred Gregory

2x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Gittins

1x **Senator Donna Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Frett-Gregory

Bills and acts referred to

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

Act 8616 Act 8616 · September 20, 2022 · An Act amending Act 8474 to adjust the fiscal year 2022 budget to appropriate finds to the U.S.V.I. Soccer Federation, Inc., as a grant for additional improvements to the professional soccer field at Plot 23-I Estate Bethlehem St. Croix, Virgin Islands, to add coverings for the bleachers and a new parking lot and require the U.S.V.I. Soccer Federation, Inc., to comply with the financial disclosure requirements under 2 V.I.C. § 29 and submit a comprehensive development plan for soccer in the Virgin Islands to the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation and the Department of Property and Procurement for approval prior to commencing the project ---0

Act 8474 Act 8474 · An Act providing an appropriation from the General Fund of the Government of the Virgin Islands for the operation of the Government of the Virgin Islands during the fiscal year October t, 2021, through September 30, 2022 =)