



| Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications

Legislature USVI

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0:00:00 I'll see you next time Let's go.

0:01:00 Thank you. Oh, my God. I love you Thank you. Let's go. I love you. Thank you. Thank you. I love you. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Thank you. Thank you. Let's go ¶¶ Oh, my God.

0:12:30 Thank you. Thank you.

0:13:30 Thank you. Thank you. I love you.

0:15:00 Thank you. Lila, lila, lila, lila, lila, lila Thank you.

0:16:30 Lilo, la, la, le, lo, te, lo, dai Lilo, la, la, le, lo, te, lo, dai Thank you. Thank you.

0:18:00 Thank you. Good afternoon colleagues. Good afternoon everyone. The Committee on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunication is hereby called to order. Good afternoon to my colleagues, staff, testifiers, and good afternoon to the people of the Virgin Islands, the viewing and listening audience. On one level we are here today to receive an update from the housing authority in terms of discussing a 2024 housing authority annual plan in which the authority sets out to the blueprint for addressing affordable housing concerns in a territory. On another level we are here because we recognize that we are in the midst of a territorial and national affordable housing crisis, which is bad and only getting worse. In March of this year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition released its annual report, The Gap, a Shortage of Housing Homes. The report found a national shortage of 7.3 million affordable and available rental homes for low-income renters. Here in

0:19:52 the Virgin Islands, we are facing a similar problem of a complete lack of affordable and available housing for medium and low-income workers and it is destroying us of the community. Yesterday I sat in my office and I was disheartened when a young mother called knowing that there was nothing I could do to help her with her immediate situation but just

to convey to me the depth of what so many people are going through in this community. Here is a young woman who is gainfully employed, goes to work every day and is doing everything right but she is getting ready to leave the territory. Why? Because she simply cannot afford to pay her rent and feed her children and as I listened to her and heard about the days in which she and her children hardly ate anything and she told me that she was ashamed she was ashamed to face her children when she told me that I actually break down and cry to be honest with you and it really really bothered me there was the real reality check for me and I must say we must do better or we can't do better at the community at this point I know that the problem is not just one-sided or there's not only one aspect to this problem we have a problem regarding building costs we have a serious problem regarding shortage of apartments for rent and we have a serious problem with incomes not

0:21:42 meeting keeping up with the increasing costs of living in the territory and if we are serious about meeting these needs for our people we are going to have to make progress in all of those areas the Virgin Islands Housing Authority play the critical role in addressing issues of affordable housing and it is the agency that is in charge of public housing communities and our housing choice virtual program which serves as the two major avenues by which the federal resources are used to provide affordable housing for medium and low-income persons as such the authority's annual plan is a critical important document because it shows us both the immediate action items and overall blueprint for the present and future of affordable housing in the territory we will be hearing today from the house the housing authority with a detailed discussion of the 2024 annual plan and the future of affordable housing in the territory and on august the 30th this committee will host a town hall on all three islands simultaneously in order to have this discussion with the public and to get their comments before the comment period for which the annual plan ends on september 5th in this way we want to assist the virginal housing authority in getting the most possible input from the community so that the plan for affordable housing going forward can be as strong as humanly possible without further ado let us begin the business of this meeting madam clerk please call the rule and read the agenda into the records one moment one moment can you please um turn on

0:23:44 know. We're going to reset for three minutes. We're starting to reset for three minutes. Thank you. Thank you.

0:25:14 Madam Clerk, please call the roll. Senator Maurice James.

0:25:44 We are back on the record, I'm sorry, Madam Clerk, please call the roll. Senator Maurice James. Here. Senator James is present. Here. Senator Angel Bulquez, Jr. Senator Bulquez, absent. Senator Samuel Carrione. Senator Carrione, absent. Senator Duane M. DeGraff. Here. Senator DeGraff, present. Senator Rae Fonseca, Senator Fonseca, present, Senator Carla Joseph, present, Senator Joseph, present, Senator Marvin Blyden, present, Senator Blyden, present, Mr. Chair, we have five present, two absent. Very well. We do have a quorum. Madam Clerk, are there any co-respondents to be ready to the record? Yes, we do. We have two. Please proceed.

0:26:43 You'll make it kind of low. Speak into the mic. August 24, 2023. Honorable Senator Blyden, Vice President, 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Capitol Building, Chateau Mali, VI 00802. Dear Mr. Chair, please be advised that due to a previously scheduled engagement, I will be late to today's meeting of the Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications. Please mark my initial absent as excused, and I look forward to joining the discussion at the earliest possible opportunity. Thank you for your time and understanding. Sincerely, Angel Bolquist, Jr., Senator at large, 35th legislature of the Virgin Islands. Please mark Senator Bolquist as tardy.

0:27:29 August 24th, 2023, Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, Chairman, Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications, 35th legislature of the Virgin Islands, Capital Building, Charter Mali, P.O. Box 1690, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, 00804. Dear Chairman Blighting, I will be late to today's committee on housing, transportation, and telecommunications meeting, which will begin at 2 p.m. in the Earl B. Otley Legislative Hall in St. Thomas, as I am in transit. Please accept my apologies for my tardiness. I look forward to joining the meeting as soon as I arrive. Your patience and understanding will greatly be appreciated. Sincerely, Samuel Carrion, Senator 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands. Thank you so much.

0:28:15 We will note that until the Senator gets to the Chambers. Thank you for that. I see we have our testifiers from the Houghton Authority already in the Chambers, so I'm going to ask you to please place your name on the record, starting from my left to my right. Your name and your title. Good afternoon, Jimmy Farmer, Director of Asset Management. Good afternoon.

0:28:45 Good afternoon, Lydia Pell, Chief Operating Officer for the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Cecile Tong Foy, Chief Financial Officer. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Emanuela Perez-Cacias, Director of Resident Wellness Empowerment. Thank you. Ms. Pelley, may proceed with the testimony. Good afternoon, honorable Senator Marvin A. Blighton, Chairman of the Committee on Housing, Transportation and

Telecommunications, Vice Chair Maurice James and Senators Angel Bocas, Junior, Samuel Carrion, Dwayne DeGraff, Ray Fonseca, and Carla Joseph.

0:29:37 Good afternoon to all other distinguished senators here today, legislative staff, the citizens of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and our VIA staff, and to the listening public. My name is Lydia Pell. I'm the chief operating officer of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. The following executive staff members are with me today. Mr. Jimmy Farmer, our director of asset management, Miss Emanuela Perez-Cacias, our director of wellness and empowerment, and our chief financial officer, Ms. Cecile Tong Foy. Unfortunately, Ms.

0:30:18 Akela Anthony, our director of housing choice voucher, um, wasn't able to be here with us today. Today, we will present testimony regarding our annual plan for fiscal year 2024 for the public and affordable housing and our housing choice voucher program, as well as our resident services plans. The plan is effective for the beginning of our fiscal year, January 1, 2024.

0:30:52 Just an overview of the annual plan. Our PHA plan or annual plan is a comprehensive guide to the public housing authority's policies, programs, operations, and strategies for meeting local housing needs and goals. There are two parts to the PHA plan. Five-year plan, which each housing authority submits to HUD once every fifth fiscal year and the annual plan, which is submitted to HUD every year. Our plan is due to HUD on October 1, 2023, 75 days prior to the commencement of the housing authority's fiscal year. We are in the 45 day public comment period, which ends on September 5th, 2023. At the end of that period, we will assess public comments and include modifications as necessary in the plan and submit it for our board of commissioners approval at the regularly scheduled board meeting on September 27th, 2023. HUD designated the Housing Authority a standard PHA performer on both the most recent public housing assessment system, otherwise known as the FAS, with 61 points.

0:32:28 The Section 8 Management Assessment Program, otherwise known as CMAP, scored 64 points. The assessments are for fiscal year 2022. What is a FAS? So as we indicated FAS, the FAS system are made up of four categories. The Housing Authority scored below the required 60 point threshold in three of the categories, which required an improvement plan. An improvement plan has been prepared and it will be submitted to HUD to correct the deficiencies that will ensure a passing grade for all four categories for the scoring in the next assessment for FY 2023.

0:33:23 The CMAP consists of 14 categories. V has scored below the required point threshold in four of the 14 categories, which required an improvement plan as well. An improvement plan has been premier prepared and submitted to HUD to correct these deficiencies that will ensure a passing grade for all 14 categories for the scoring in the next assessment for fiscal year 2023. HUD requires housing authorities to report its inventory to the public in its annual plan.

0:34:03 Our inventory consists of a total of 4,612 combined units. That is 2,525 units of public housing and 2,087 units are housing choice vouchers, not units, vouchers. One point of clarification is necessary to understand the four documents on our website. In HUD's information system, the housing authority has two controlling numbers, VQ001 and VQ901.

0:34:43 The first one is for public housing, VQ001, and the second is for the housing choice voucher program, VQ901. Both categories have a part one and a part two to the plan, to its plan. The information is essentially the same, although requested by the Housing Authority, HUD has not been able to consolidate the information into one controlling VQ number. For those that do not know, everything in the HUD oversight environment is overly complex. With the technical requirements of the plan covered, we can share more broadly where the Housing Authority is at, where we are going, and how are we going to get there. The last few years have been very challenging from the hurricanes, pandemic, supply chain issue, worker shortages, affordable housing shortages, and construction cost increases all have contributed to a somewhat mixed perception of the Housing Authority.

0:35:51 But we are here to share what the outlook, we are here to share that the outlook is good and it's going to get better. Despite the impact of the coronavirus on operations, the overall health of the housing authority continues to be financially strong due to well-managed federal programs and an exceptional balance sheet, which has resulted in five years of clean audits, no findings. also positive cash flow, adequate reserves, and all our vendors paid in a net 30 days. Although we are financially sound, we have many issues with an old inventory of public housing. Our plan for fixing our old public housing is also very good. Our short-term plan is to continue to collaborate with VITEMA and other agencies to anticipate, prepare and bolster our response to natural disasters to ensure the safety of our residents. At the same time, we are working to improve our capacity by increasing maintenance staff and contractors working on repairs and vacant apartments. While we will end this year with 95% occupancy, we have only approximately 100 units monthly to house families from our waiting list.

0:37:26 We are also beginning to see a net reduction in work orders monthly, with a particular focus on repairing apartments that may impact residents' health and safety. You often hear us talk about our long-term plans. It is because our 60-year-old

public housing inventory was poorly designed, cheaply built and inadequately financed to replace its building systems. When the cost to repair your building systems for a 3,000 unit inventory is over \$200 million and you receive only \$10 million a year, you can't realistically catch up without fully replacing all the buildings and projects. It is an unavoidable reality, but we have the right plan to achieve long-term success. VEHA's \$1 billion long-term plan is in its third year of implementation, but the estimated cost has increased to \$2 billion, based on the factors again mentioned above. To obtain the additional funding the housing authority has lobbied Delegate Plaskett's office for increased national funding for the low income housing tax credit program as set aside of the national housing trust funds for territories and locally to the Bryan administration and its housing committee for permanent funding allocated for the local housing trust fund.

Moreover, we have lobbied the Housing Finance Authority for an increase in the allocation of CDBGDR funds. While there are always competing priorities, we believe that preserving affordable housing for low to moderate income families in public housing must be supreme if we really care about our people to have long term success through the foundation

0:39:31 of Superior Housing. Success for our residents will be achieved through our long-term plan with new opportunities with better rental housing, home ownership, flexible housing choice vouchers and comprehensive resident service programs. At this point we will highlight revisions, additions and modifications to the annual plan that are significant and impactful to residents and applicants to our Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs. Part 1.

0:40:07 Part 1 of the plan talks about the Annual Plan Elements for Public Housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The first section talks about housing needs and strategies for addressing housing needs. Based on our 2015 housing demand study, the affordable housing need in the territory was 5,000 units and that probably increased about 20% after the dual hurricanes in 2017. It is critical to replace our old public housing, but it does not add any net additional housing to address the shortage of affordable housing in the territory. Feedback is also essential.

0:40:53 To ensure constructive feedback on our plans to replace our 3,000 units of absolute public housing, the Housing Authority engaged an internationally renowned urban planning organization, the Urban Land Institute. The Urban Land Institute, which ensured a cross section of voices that provides insightful ideas related to schools, transportation, jobs, energy, and building housing practices.

0:41:28 As a result, we have a solid plan of action to replace all the units in 10 years and expand residents use of the vouchers. HUD supports the plan by providing a solid 20 year of voucher funding for each project. Number two, the deconcentrating and other policies that govern eligibility selection and admissions. HUD has had a deconcentration of poverty policy on the books for a long time that is almost insurmountable to achieve in the territory. The goal is to have properties with a balance of lower-income households with that of higher-income households. For the territory it means having a higher percentage of higher-income households in each of our communities. Achieving the goal is complicated because our waiting list contains over 73% of lower-income households. Moreover this This year, HUD is requiring PHAs to enforce the higher income households in public housing to pay higher rents or face evictions. Thus, the complexity and incongruity of competing HUD goals are maddening.

0:42:57 The practical solution is to help more residents get jobs. The housing authority is doing that in three ways. VEHA has at least 30 residents working as section three workers and continue to recruit from that pool for permanent jobs. Number two, the housing authority encourages our developer partners to hire section three workers to work on our construction projects. And number three, the housing authority is working with the VI department of labor to train and employ our residents in active recovery projects. The third section is called operations and management. The housing authority is implementing computer software options to become more efficient in our housing operations. We are currently working out the kinks of a standalone kiosk at selected communities where residents can input their information for recertification, work orders and changes in circumstances. We expect that after the head of households become familiar with the system, that the process would lead to an increased efficiency in operations and communications. Additionally, online rent payments will be launched on September 1st, 2023.

0:44:23 Residents can now enjoy the convenience of paying rent online with their payment method of choice. The fourth section, Rent Determination Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016, otherwise known as the HATMA. In the last six years, HUD has been refining a new policy that will affect public housing resident households that have a higher income. On June 14, 2023, all housing authorities are required to conform, conform, sorry, with the final rule of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act, HATMA.

0:45:08 The rule requires housing authorities to implement a policy to account for over-income households. In short, all housing authorities must update their admissions and continued occupancy policy and offer those over-income households the opportunity to stay in public housing after a 24-month grace period, but they must pay either an alternative rent, which is higher of the fair market rent, or per unit month subsidy. Accordingly, our final policy is to provide a household with every opportunity to stay in public housing and give a family the option to pay the alternative rent, but if the family

declines, we must terminate the tenancy. Concurrently, we have less than 50 households out of the approximately 1,900 households who would be affected by the policy change. We will be working with all affected households to have a safe and successful transition. The fifth section is called grievance is a grievance procedures.

0:46:30 As the housing authorities goes through significant changes with new construction, administrative policy changes, and house rules, we will make sure that residents have the benefit of timely and impartial opportunities for grievance hearings when they are when there are disagreements. Therefore, we have engaged two vendors to provide neutral third-party grievance hearings. This will ensure that residents are aware of their right to a hearing and we will be communicating during recertification with flyers at our sites and on our website. The sixth section, Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy and the Dwelling Lease Revisions. Besides the changes in the ACAP required by HATMA described above, the Housing Authority is proposing to increase the security deposit that a new household will have to pay from the current average of \$205 to \$500 or one month's rent, whichever is higher. Of course, the basis for the increase is to encourage lease compliance, continued care of the units during Tennessee, and to reduce the cost of making a unit ready for reoccupancy. If necessary, a family will have the option to pay the security deposit over time, roughly a three month period. The next section is called housekeeping standards, policy and revisions.

0:48:13 Most resident households appreciate the opportunity to live in an apartment with some federal assistance and do everything to maintain the unit as they received on the day they moved in. However, there are some households that need reminders and consequences for non-compliance. These housekeeping standards are to address that minority of households. To improve the livability and conditions of the apartments, the Housing Authority is updating its uniform standards for all resident households and requirements for the common areas as well. Timely reminders, increased inspections, and improved communications between property management staff and resident households will result in better and safer overall residential communities. It is incumbent upon all of us to support the Housing Authority's effort to improve our communities and we appreciate those elected officials that consistently encourage lease compliance behavior respectfully respectful courtesy between neighbors and well-mannered young people. The next section is our home ownership program. The Williams Delight 300 unit public housing community is the only home ownership program that is active. The home ownership plan was approved by HUD in 1995.

0:49:47 To date, 35 units have been sold. 183 units have been identified for demolition. 82 units are structurally fit for renovation and subsequent sale. The housing authority is still actively pursuing any unused ARPA funds to assist in the demolition and rehabilitation of units to make the Williams Delight community viable.

0:50:17 Any assistance this committee can render would be greatly appreciated. It should be noted that the resident council of Oswell Harris court community, the Oswell Harris court community has expressed an interest in a similar program. The housing authority has stated that a source of funds needs to be identified to pursue the home ownership options for the residents of Oswell Harris court. The housing authority raises this issue because the housing committee perhaps can help by identifying a source of funds to help identify options for this community. Resident wellness and empowerment. Traditional public housing and for traditional public housing and new developments. The housing authority's primary purpose is to provide the best affordable housing and the best plan to improve the lives of our families.

0:51:15 Our new developments have resident services funded by the investors and therefore we have a more comprehensive approach. Our traditional public housing have insufficient funding for the same level of services. But as each older traditional public housing community is replaced, each one will have the comprehensive package of resident services called bright path which is a support model promoting residents health and wellness housing stability economic mobility and personal self-sufficiency recently we have expanded the department to 12 experienced staff members to serve both the traditional and the new housing communities. What is important for the public to know is that we will achieve improving outcomes for each household through partnerships with service providers and effective resident councils. And this year we have made significant progress with engaging both stakeholders. Our fiscal year 2024 plan has a goal to double the number of families in our self-sufficiency program to 50 families. The best industry practice for resident services programs is to have organized representation from the resident body.

0:52:47 It is why our service model relies heavily on active and effective resident councils. Currently, we have three resident councils with three more being formed this year. For 2024, we expect to double that number of active elected resident councils to six. Also in fiscal year 2024, from the pool, from this pool of 12 resident council, we expect the council presidents to make up the resident advisory board, otherwise known as the RAB. With this level of interaction and feedback, we will achieve effective collaboration, targeted programs and accountability from both sides. It is clear from the questions that were asked in the public review period that we recently held with the councils that those asked by this housing community committee that more sessions were needed to inform the public of general issues on how some programs work. We welcome the opportunity to provide more information sharing sessions. The second plan, the housing

choice voucher program, housing needs and strategies for addressing housing needs under the HCV program.

- 0:54:14 Our housing choice voucher program is governed by HUD regulations and our HCVP administrative plan. Several changes will be implemented in the administrative plan in fiscal year 2024. We are changing the frequency and methods of conducting inspections through HUD's new inspection model called the National Standard for Physical Inspection of Real Estate, otherwise known as INSPIRE. We will be also expanding the home ownership options for HCV and increasing technical support for our special voucher programs.
- 0:55:04 For property inspections, to ensure units that are leased to our families are safe and decent, we are going to increase the frequency of our inspections to twice a year. When necessary, we will be able to conduct remote video inspections and allow landlords to self-certify repairs of units that usually require an onsite re-inspection. These changes to the plan will reduce the administrative time to house families.
- 0:55:40 Also in the third quarter of 2023, we will begin the process of educating both our landlords and voucher leaseholders in the requirements of HUD's new INSPIRE program. The first update in 15 years, the goal of INSPIRE is to modernize and improve the inspection process of HUD-assisted properties with a stronger emphasis on health, safety and functional aspects of our building systems.
- 0:56:09 In regards to home ownership, we currently have four families using their vouchers for home ownership and we want to encourage more families to do the same. To make it easier for enterprising families, we are going to make some program modifications such as eliminating the one year requirement to be eligible to use a voucher for home ownership and in general this will allow current public housing residents to switch to the voucher program more specifically this option could potentially assist public housing families that are over income to combine the voucher the voucher home ownership option with the territories VI slice Home Ownership Incentive Program. Lastly, we are amending our Section 8 Home Ownership Program to set aside 25 vouchers for elderly and disabled residents at Williams Delight. Basic information about the program is included in the annual plan so that we can familiarize families with the proposed actions while we develop the written plan for implementation in FY 2024. For special voucher programs, we have 151 special vouchers in five categories. We have mainstream vouchers, foster to youth independence vouchers, emergency housing vouchers, veterans vouchers, and the single room occupancy vouchers. Although we have only a total of 41 households using these specialty vouchers, dozens of families are holding vouchers, looking for units to lease. Although there are no substantive changes in the plan, we want to highlight our
- 0:58:24 thousand dollar incentive program for landlords. Landlords are, are going to be able to provide a unit to lease to our waiting list applicants with this thousand dollars incentive. Moreover, we want to spotlight the housing finance authorities program to pay landlords \$50,000 to repair hurricane damage units that could be lease to our waiting list applicants. Finally, we will be providing technical assistance to the organizations like Continuum of Care and the Veterans Administration to improve the process to refer individuals to use these vouchers.
- 0:59:11 Also in the plan is a section on the capital fund program and five-year action plan. The annual plan summarizes the capital fund program for the fiscal years 2021 through 2025. Based on the 10.4 million received in 2021, each of the next four years projects the same total amount. Of course, the funds vary based on congressional appropriations and HUD provisions.
- 0:59:51 In general, a housing authority has 24 months to obligate its annual capital fund program grants and 48 months to spend that money. Generally, the annual capital fund grant is split with 30% use for administration and operations and 70% is used for building systems and dwelling unit improvements. The priorities for the physical improvements are used to support our redevelopment plan by demolishing obsolete buildings and making roof repairs from the hurricane. Our building system repairs are prioritized for reasonable accommodation for disabled household and repair of such units for temporary relocation. The annual plan provides detail for each of the five years, which allows for changes in priorities each year. There are no changes to the capital fund program in the plan. Also discussed in the plan is a section on mixed finance modernization or development. The Housing Authority is continuously reviewing its own public housing portfolio to determine the suitability of available funding and redevelopment opportunities.
- 1:01:19 Further, the Housing Authority incorporates feedback from the administration to ensure St. Thomas has adequate, affordable housing early in the plan, as well as feedback from the Housing Committee to ensure that there is adequate senior housing in the replacement of our housing stock. We incorporated both suggestions as well as feedback from our HUD partners in our 10-year redevelopment plan. Our current project priorities by district are as follows. St. Croix priority projects are the Walter I.M. Hodge, Wilfer Pedro Holm, D. Hamilton Jackson Terrace, Alfonso Piggy Gerard, John F. Kennedy Terrace, Nicasio Nico Apartments, Ludvig Harrigan Court, Candido Guadalupe, Marlee Holmes and Editions, and Williams Delight.

- 1:02:16 All at the same time, St. Thomas priority projects, the, uh, includes the priorities of the redevelopment of the state to, to high rise apartments in three phases at three site locations, which include the Duno site, what we call two to north and two to south, as well as the replacement of Lucinda milling in the annual plan. we provide details on each estimated costs, funding sources and projected schedules. However, it is important to highlight some of the issues that will impact our redevelopment efforts in 2024. We will need the Bryan administration and this housing committee to support a dedicated source of funding for affordable housing through the local housing trust fund, as well as to set aside as well as a set aside of the national housing trust fund for this territory moreover locally there needs to be consideration for preservation of affordable housing by purchasing portfolios that are being offered for sale by developers retreating from operating housing in the territory. Lastly, to sustain operations of affordable housing in the territory, there must be some consideration to establishing a property insurance reserve or reinsurance mechanism for the escalating insurance premium for assisted affordable housing in the territory. In closing, the Housing Authority will modify these annual plans based on relevant feedback from residents, voucher holders, and the general public. The plans will be enhanced by these goals and outcomes for the people we serve. We are grateful for the continued support of this body and our dedicated staff. We look forward to answering our questions relative to this testimony.
- 1:04:22 Thank you. Thank you so much, Ms. Perl for that testimony. I must say this housing plan is critical and it's very important because as it's well stated many times, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. So it's important that we really come up with a plan and have all the input that's necessary in order to move forward. Let me...Mita, can I get a glance of St. Croix? Is there anyone in St. Croix?
- 1:04:56 We are going to go in the order of Senator Marie Fonseca, Senator DeGraff, Senator Carla Joseph and Senator Maurice James. But before I go to my colleagues for the first six-minute line of questioning, I will ask for some clarification in respect to the testimony. Ms. Pell, in the testimony, you spoke to under the concentrating and other policies that govern eligibility. You spoke to the requirement from HUD, right, which is requiring PHAs to enforce higher income household in public housing and to pay higher rents or face evictions.
- 1:05:54 Now, let me ask you in respect to that, isn't there a flat rent policy in housing authority or, but first of all, you're speaking of housing authority or Section 8, first of all, that's my first question, in respect to paying higher rents? So this is in respect to public housing. Okay, with that being said, so there is no longer a flat rent requirement? No, there is the option for flat rent, but this has to do with the change in the HAPMA that is coming up in the other section that we discussed. Explain the change for me, please, because flat individual high income usually choose a flat rent because they make more than a lower income residence. So you see trying to make those individuals making more money to pay higher rent.
- 1:06:49 So it's a lot of change. Can you explain a change to me please. So Mr. Farmer is going to assist me please. Good afternoon Jimmy Farmer director of asset management keeping in mind what HUD's goal is as it relates to housing low income families the option for flat rent is available however with the new code of federal regulations that has been implemented. HUD recognizes that there are individuals living in public housing developments across the territory also throughout the United States that are above the income ranges right and so therefore because HUD provides subsidies to the public housing authorities we are now in a position not a decision that the housing authority has made, but we are guided by HUD policies. And that policy is very clear as it relates to what mechanisms every housing authority must put in place to be able to identify the individuals who are over income or not, let me say, let me not say individuals, households that are over income, and to be able to course correct that, the housing authorities have to look at providing the option of being able to allow them to pay the higher rent. And because they're paying the higher rent, the HUD will no longer provide the subsidy on that unit. So now the housing authority loses the subsidy that we would normally receive on the unit.
- 1:08:26 And you spoke to losing a subsidy. So that is that where the alternative rent comes in or what is what is the alternative rent when you say alternative rent the household will be responsible for paying the housing authority to accept the subsidy that will no longer pay the difference correct the difference interesting interesting um see that's why it's important for us to discuss these on this plan moving forward because there are some changes that I have some question about and that respect he also spoke to the first of all I'm happy that you have set aside in a fine 25 vultures for seniors that you know that's very important and I'm pleased by that you spoke to self-certifying when it comes to Section 8 and the individual homes, what protection do you have in terms of assuring that when one self-certifies and it is not up to par or something happens, what protection do you have in the plan for the authority and the residents moving forward? Is there anything within that space that you have looked at when it comes to self-certifying units for Section 8 tenants?
- 1:09:56 Have you thought about that? Senator, so we would still have to, even though the self-certification is optional, we still would be required to do our regular inspections. So sub-certification again is one of those things that we are putting out as an option so that we can help to house the families quicker instead of waiting for inspectors to come out to do the

certification inspection. Okay but thanks for that clarification because that's what I thought. You have to get them in and then you can inspect after. Correct. Okay very well and lastly my last question to you before I go to my college because most of my question is from the housing plan because i went through the whole plan but based on the testimony i've had a couple highlights you spoke to also uh your most um assessment in terms of the fast uh you score 62 in a public housing on 64 section 8. i know section 8 when i was there usually scored very high My question is, a two part question, for the public housing portion, I know you have aid management assessment program for housing. Which four areas did you not score above 62 in for public housing and why have Section they drop to 64 they usually score much higher at least yeah they usually score very high all the time every year so that's my two questions why what's the issue with section it in terms of them scoring a 64 and public housing what four areas you know did we not score about 62 in good afternoon this is Jimmy Farmer director of asset management the key components

1:11:53 for files for the LIPH program capital fund program the management of operations physical conditions which assesses how well the housing authority is maintaining the assets in addition to financial operations physical condition of the assets is where the housing authority did fall short as it relates to the react inspections there was only one asset in the it was in the District of St. Croix that actually had a successful react score passing which was Marley Marley addition and so now we are in the process of moving towards operating with our corrective action plan to bring the other assets up to par to ensure that they pass the now required inspire inspections scheduled for later this year.

1:12:41 Very well. What about a section portion. I'm interesting in that about that because like I say they usually score pretty high so I was curious after why so our Section 8 program typically is a is usually a high performer correct we we had some new regulations an additional really a shortage of staff and we fell short in certain areas since then the The Puerto Rico field office has been working with us, offering a lot more technical assistance and training. So the new individuals and the change in staffing, we're going to see a lot more or a better increase back to the high performer that the Section 8 program was before.

1:13:36 Okay. Thank you. When you do complete your corrective action plan, I'd like to have a copy forward to the committee. Okay? I'd like to recognize the presence of Senator Angel Bolquist. Welcome Senator. Senator Fonseca, you're recognized for your six minutes. Yes. Yes. Thank you. Blessings. Senator Fonseca's mic, please. Yes.

1:14:05 Thank you, Mr. Chair. thank you blessings uh sorry about that thank you blessings mr chair and pleasant good afternoon to our distinguished and qualified uh folks from the virgin islands housing authority uh mr farmer lydia hughes pell and other testifiers with them you know with the fast i can see some progress um you know i ought to congratulate you you know i know for sure that um you have a lot of qualifications and experience you know i keep telling everybody in the community miss lydia hughes pell here that is in front of us there ain't nobody in the whole virgin islands spend more federal dollars build more projects not projects developments communities homes with good marks you know i think it's time that she takes over and is able to run this housing authority you see we need to have our locals running these agencies when they've spent about you know x up teen years and have all the qualifications masters of architecture and all of that you know the housing authority um what we have to understand right is they have a lot of old stock you know one one which is pacing gardens and one five as well harris court them place bill from 1950 and thing they all all all is you know 59 and before we need to deal with the total replacement costs and be able to replace those communities the government in the virgin islands has to assist because the housing authority also has this thing where you call it total development costs you see the hud does not give the virgin islands sufficient funds to fix these places because construction costs in the vi is a lot more expensive than in south carolina and mississippi you see until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another is fine inferior is finally and commonly discredited and abandoned you know well everywhere is you know we as a community must do more and make better choices if we want to be able to own a piece of the rock we need to stop the gentrification that's going on in our communities we need to get qualified to purchase the land or to build a home it takes sacrifice you know you i asked what are the lending patterns of our financial institutions because you know the home ownership we're talking about home ownership and it's not just to find the housing authority you know what are our banks doing there's only merchants bank and i think the usda bank giving home constructions loan in our community you know the grs the government have to do a part when i was you know younger years in the government they used to give a land loan that's how i was able to purchase a land and after you get the land then you can get the house because right now with the vi um in slice program our locals ain't qualifying because they ain't meeting the ratio the land to equity ratio but when you already have the land your ratios go down so we have to also look at our consumption why is it right you can get a car loan from the bank 70 60 000 for car loan as soon as you drive it off the lot the car depreciates the land loan is a good look at this land thing in sinjan right where the land was purchased it was two thousand dollars an acre in sinjan when this land was purchased now you can get land for like a million dollars folks we have to do the sacrifice don't buy the new car we have to get a home you have to start with the government helping you so i want to go back to Lydia Hughes now and the Housing Authority. What is the total replacement cost for

the

- 1:18:41 housing stock of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority? Do you have that number? Senator, as of our 2022 physical needs assessments, it is over 200 million dollars. So you see that? That means that the Housing Authority needs over 200 million dollars to be able to get the units up to one minute excellent stock so by them being a little bit you know below the fuzz and thing i can see progress you know let's get lydia in charge so that she can be able to show the people that she can get the job done you know i don't know mr farmer too well but the short time i've seen him that he is he is here the whole staff of the housing authority has the capabilities but to get back to the home ownership we as our 30 seconds we have to live and smile up don't buy that big brand new car when you get a raise and thing buy some land this is how we're going to be able to qualify to get into the homes in the virginals if not we're going to lose our territory and thank you very much uh mr chair for the time thank you senator fonseca let me um just put something on the record in terms of the rad program can you um explain to the public what the rap program is all about the the RAD program. So, RAD, the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program, acronym RAD, R-A-D, is a housing program by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which allows housing authorities to transform their public housing uh communities and through that transformation
- 1:20:54 they're able to utilize dollars that they would have received in its capital fund and combine it with vouchers to create that subsidy for um half payments under the voucher program so it's It's essentially transforming public housing to housing choice vouchers. Okay. Very well. And in respect to the housing plan in which we are here to discuss today, I know our office have basically extended a certain amount of funds to inform our residents of the public housing communities and the housing choice voucher recipients and a larger community as a whole of this plan.
- 1:21:39 What plans have you done in terms of informing our residents, your tenants, about the plan? So HUD requires, the plan has certain steps. The requirements are we are to meet with our resident council and our RAP board members with the first draft of the plan. So we had that meeting.
- 1:22:09 These are the individuals that are representing various communities based on their councils, and they help us put the first draft in place. From that first draft, we then establish it publicly. So what we've done is make copies of the plans. They're at each site. It's on our website and it's at our central office offices. Okay. So you said they're at each site. You mean in the bulletin boards? Each property. The bulletin boards?
- 1:22:44 No, right at the office. Okay. So in various locations as our staff has designated at each property. Very well. I would like to recognize the presence of Senator Donna Fred Gregory. Welcome Senator and thank you for being here. Senator DeGraff, you're recognised for your six minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, colleagues, good afternoon, testifiers, all of you and listeners are present. Achieving the goal is complicated because our waiting list contains over 73% of low-income households. moreover this year hud is require requiring fast enforce higher income households in public housing to pay higher rents or face evictions thus the complexity and incongruity incongruity mean outer place of competing hot goals are maddening your own statement your own testimony saying, the people you're working for, mad. That's how I interpret it. Because I'm saying, you know, we're forcing people out. If we're forcing people out, you know, I was, I always listen content to, but after that, page four was read to me. I stopped listening. I read this over and over again we're forcing people out and then we are saying down here there's a grievance procedure that grievance procedure applies to that particular statement of forcing people out because of higher income to pay more rent so is it a force out or is it they can afford it and we're now doing it this way. How actually is it?
- 1:24:37 It's a little bit of both. These individuals, this is not a new issue for HUD. It's been an issue for over almost six years. There are individuals that make different to the tax credit program your salaries are based on our income limits over income. You can afford based on that number a market rate unit but what we're seeing is is going to impact these families because they're they're accustomed to those subsidies that they would normally get from other programs because they were able to live in public housing right but hud has has put its foot down and said no more all housing authorities um are now required to to make this implementation by january 1 of 2024.
- 1:25:46 so so your statement will give you no trouble right does the complexity and incongruity of competing hard goals are maddening hard mad but out of the mind is how how i look at it and and i i'm reading verbatim i ain't trying to get you no trouble trust me i'm not trying to get any through but that's where this whole eight page testimony ended for me hot gone mad we forcing our people out the people them who need these services we here start out the whole conversation with housing is a crisis in the world yes if people build a shanty open in the bush the police go up and knock it down you can't be like pushanti up here but now we have a housing hud is is supposed to help you know low-income people and we have these it is just hud gone mad so the grievance procedure doesn't apply to what hud has mandated for you it just basically applies for everything else? The grievance procedure would apply but again the the statutes have been put in place and the regulations put in place and it has become the responsibility of each housing authority to assist these families once

information implementation takes place and this housing authority will do its best we we have been looking at pros and cons of how in the implementation of this we're going to be able to leverage with other agencies to help these families it's not going to be easy okay so this increase in the security deposit from 205 to 500 is across the board for everybody so whether you're making more money or not we're increasing from 205 to 500 hard gone mad is that correct or is that just for those higher income people it's across the board

- 1:28:03 That's how I understand it in the testimony. One minute. Right, but we will have the option in the security deposit to allow a time frame of three months to make those payments. If I ain't got it in one month, I ain't going to get it in three months. I could get it for you, but I ain't going to get it in three months. And again, I ain't trying to be rude or disrespectful. I'm just saying the deposit gone up, hot gone mad. Now, it provides neutral third party for grievance hearings. Who are the neutral third parties and how were they determined to be as neutral third parties? Right. So previously, what would happen in our grievance process is other housing authority staff was being used to assist in hearing grievances. So we've now changed that process to be third party.
- 1:29:04 So there's no influence from any one of our staff members in decision making. So we have two companies that are now doing that. Who are they? I don't have the names, but I can give it to you. Yes, to the chair. Final question now, Mr. Chair. If I may, and the testimony went on to state that currently we have less than 50 households out of approximately 1,900 households who could be affected by the policy change. So that number is a solid number, or that's a number that can increase up to probably affecting all 1,900? No, not all 1,900.
- 1:29:52 There is a possibility of increase. We know of 45 right now, and it could be upwards to 50, but it would never increase to 1,900. Okay. So isn't that critical beyond the 50 right now? Correct. Okay. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Thank you, Senator DeGraff. CEO Opel, for the record, in respect to my colleague question, in respect to the rent going from \$250 to \$500, \$250 to \$500, is that a HUD mandated policy or is that something that the authority plan to implement moving forward? Just for the record.
- 1:30:33 Clarification. Could you repeat the question? The security deposit, the change from \$250 to \$500, is that a HUD mandated policy or Is that something the Housing Authority is trying to implement moving forward? That's my question. Good afternoon. Good afternoon. Mr. Farmer, please, and please state your name before you speak, because we put us remote. Good afternoon. Jimmy Farmer, Director of Asset Management. To answer your question, the increase in the security deposit is not a HUD-mandated policy. That is a Virgin Islands Housing Authority.
- 1:31:10 Internally we've had conversations relative to current security policy, current security deposits, and as we look at the total cost to turn units and what's left in terms of what a resident normally has on the books in terms of what a security deposit is, we're not in the business to make money, but we do want to make sure we're holding our residents accountable as it relates to maintaining the assets. Did the board approve this mandate as yet? No. Has the board approved this as yet or is it a plan?
- 1:31:46 No. The board has not approved it. Right. Because it's part of the commentary in the plan. So as we go through the plan, it's one of the elements that we are proposing. And based on this plan, how much have you done an assessment to see exactly really how much money, you will, revenues you will have in respect to such a policy, have you done an assessment of what type of funding we are speaking to in order to help maintain the units based on the condition that you stated? At this, Lydia Pell, at this point, no, we have not, but a lot of changes, especially with the inspection protocols for inspire etc is gonna change the way we do inspections and rehab our units so that change is gonna the dollar amount and the data that we're looking at us tell what the cost is is going to be different 2024 because so many things have impact those numbers, the costs of materials, staffing, the rates of pay, but it's something that we can look at and provide at a later date. Yeah, please do because, you know, I mean, it has more than doubled and I was just wondering, where did the number come from? There should be a reason for that number, you know, that specific number. And I know in April, April, you had released guidance, relaxing policies that forbid persons with criminal histories from living in public housing communities but further it gave the public housing
- 1:33:31 authority the authority to develop policies and to make determinations on a case by case basis. What steps have the Virgin Islands housing authority taken in this regard. Good afternoon Jimmy Farmer director of asset management. The housing authority has to walk a very fine line as it relates to declining an application because there is criminal activity. The housing authority does not want to be set up in a position where we are sued for discrimination because an individual who hasn't applied for an apartment maybe has some things on their record. So as you stated we have to take those cases literally case by case to determine and ensure and also ensure the individuals that we are allowing into our public housing developments who may have less than stellar background checks that they do not present a liability to any of the residents and also to the staff.

- 1:34:38 So the question was have you have you done that in terms of showing a day that kids by kids process for for some individual because I know in the past you know individuals for instance probably had um a disagreement or what have you and got a misdemeanor for a fight 40 years ago and this got what disqualified do you do those on a case-by-case basis correct that is correct okay very well senator to recognize for your six minutes good day uh thank you so much mr chairman it's a pleasant good day to everyone here especially uh members of executive staff of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. I do have some questions and I will begin first with my questioning relative to your your strategy outlined as far as your resident wellness and empowerment uh traditional housing and new development which is found on page six of eight uh kindly indicate for us uh how many you you indicated you have expanded the department's uh staff to 12. how many were there initially can you kindly recognize uh the young ladies mike on the far right of me good afternoon emanuela perez cassius the number of staff that we had prior i am not sure but we do have 12 individuals on staff to ensure that we are addressing all of the specific areas of need one moment for me just break it down or miss pell may be able to give some historic information regarding that but uh indicate how many persons and personnel do you have
- 1:36:38 on each island district currently yes currently we have two resident wellness coordinators in st thomas one solution support staff and then we have two territorial positions which would be our solution community solution support and our fss coordinator and then in the st korean district we also have two resident wellness coordinators and a marketing specialist along with the director positions okay so you have three three positions um well two so you have a total of that that looks a little bit right now nine right okay because i was saying it isn't it isn't shaping up to the 12 as you reflected in your testimony i'm not sure if 12 is a goal to fill the department okay so it uh it says it's 12 it has been expanded meaning uh it's a past tense and it is already in place so you actually have nine staff members total with 12 created positions in the department and nine okay and you have a total of three additional positions that you are awaiting to be filled correct yes okay now we get to the clear understanding now I then I wanted to to ask relative to your your goal um and go down a bit a fiscal year 2024 plan what has a goal to double the number of families in our self-sufficiency program to 50 families that implies that you have 25 families here i don't know currently enrolled in your family self-sufficiency program how many do you have currently we do have 25 families in roll break it down for me by island district
- 1:38:45 are you asking the number of participants the number of participants per island district per saint thomas st john and the number per saint croix senator i would have to get back to you with that information 50 is a low low number I mean 25, 25 is a low number, give me a moment. So I would have, so Mr. Chairman, if she could provide, if we could have Ms. Emanuela Perez provide that information, that would be very important because then we want to know where they are and in fact achieving their goals to become economically self-sufficient as is one of the charge under the u.s department of housing and urban development uh next let's move on um you indicated you have same area three resident councils with three more being formed this year how many resident council in the saint thomas district has been formed we've got two resident councils in the saint thomas district okay where are they which housing communities as well harris court and kerwin terrace okay and which others do you have planned to be formed monday is elections and we will have election at the rds heights in st croix and in the st thomas district we'll have pearson gardens and bovonni estate okay on monday one minute no it's the next three days each community will have a different election on each day so it'll be the 28th the 29th and the 30th elections will be held within the communities okay so you said oswell harris court uh curwin terrace you already have resident councils what's the other community that you have a resident council because you said williams delight in saint williams delight okay great um i do have a more some questions here um your rap board how is that populated 30 seconds based
- 1:40:40 on every president from all of the various resident council so you you're missing resident council presidents from ario diaz bovonni um some of the other communities in do you have one from hh burgh's home uh so you're missing president so how how many persons sits on these on the rad board the rad board would consist of a president from each council so currently the rad board is anticipated to be formed in 2024 after we finish our phase four elections okay so mr chairman i do have some additional questions okay so i let me just ask one final question because i did look through your annual plan and i noted that it indicated that um under c other documents and certification the resident advert advisory board which is the rab board correct committee did the rab have comments on the pha plan um which said you mark yes but i'm i'm questioning whether you had a quorum based on what you have defined as a rab board to present uh the comments or do you have that that level of leeway and flexibility that you just go with who was the past president or the like you can answer on the chair's time okay so Lydia Pell so the RAB board and Resident Council are comments that you see or the statement written in the plan because we haven't had a bonafide RAB board that's That's why Ms. Perez-Casius was indicating. What we've been doing is asking the members from the resident councils to participate.

- 1:42:41 So these comments are cumulative comments from not just what is designated at the RAB board because we have no RAB board designation right now. We need to have that designation and we plan to have it in FY 2024 when we bring on the other three councils so that they can vote for a RAB board representative. Mayor Mrakas- Thank you. Is that a sign?
- 1:43:18 Ms. I don't want someone to give you anything. Ms. I don't want someone to. I might not rely with the time, so. Mr. Okay, very well. Ms. Pell, do you guys have any challenges with the other community in respect to the tenant councils, getting them online, on board? Do you have any challenges? Ms. I'll let Ms. Perez-Cacias respond to that. Ms. Imanuela Perez-Cacias. Yes. Senator, we're not having any challenges getting the elections out. We're just being very systematic and strategic about the way that we're doing it, ensuring that all of our resident councils are fully onboarded, trained, registered in the Lieutenant Governor's office and identified funding within their access before we move on to the next elections. So therefore we're doing them three at a time, phasing each one in.
- 1:44:10 And in 2024, you will see Candido Guadalupe and the other communities get online. As for those that are already online, I know the last time I went to the meeting, the state is still who are not up and going in terms of their funding, have that been rectified? In two of the communities, we have been able to finish all of the processes in regards to getting the bank accounts registered and the monies inputted in. Which two communities are we speaking to? Oswal Harris Court and Williams Delight.
- 1:44:37 Okay, very well. Let me ask you quickly before I go to the next senator, which is Senator Maurice James, my co-chair. In respect to the plan, what is the plan for your employees assigned to the different housing communities that are slated for that conversation? And will those persons have continuous coverage under the current retirement and benefit plans? and what will be the implication for job security and seniority when it comes to the plan, which includes all of you guys. Yes, Lydia Pell. So our current staffing, as I've indicated in previous hearing, we're the best property management team there is in the territory. I agree. The only. So what is actually, and we've seen it, in the last RAD or our first RAD conversion project at Walter I.M. Hodge even though the property management company is a third party outside of VEHA the individuals that we have given and negotiated with our developers is to give our VEHA staff first preference for these jobs in that negotiation with developers we actually calculated what they would have earned or through GERS whatever that percentage is is calculated in the salary that they would continue to have they will not participate in GERS but we have negotiated for that to be part of the salary okay thank you for that explanation senator marie james you recognize your six minutes thank you thank you mr cheer good
- 1:46:32 afternoon virgin islands good afternoon testifiers good afternoon colleagues and everyone in the room and and those listening i want to begin by asking about williams delight and um the 183 units that are being demolished what's going to happen are they are those plots going to be um well homes constructed on those lots what's going to happen with that uh lydia pell um so that was our initially uh vision so initially we were going to demolish and then rebuild, uh, but it was too costly. Uh, so we, we are actually opting two things. One of the comments we received while we were, um, reviewing the plan with the resident council members is that they would like the option, even if a house is slated for demolition, to be able to purchase it as is as is as is even with the cracks in the floors or and and so in the plan there is language about that option and so we have to also be careful because there is a liability on the housing authorities part if we were to proceed with selling a home that is slated for demolition by a struck or certified by a structural engineer for demolition but we recognize that there is
- 1:48:20 a possibility that those individuals may be able to transform that home okay I am going to give you a lesson on that one yes in 1989 Hurricane Hugo hit St. St. Croix. And in 1990, they put the trailers down at Castlebrook. How many years? How many years? 33 years. Correct? Correct. Alright. At one point, a couple of senators in St. Croix said, do not do the entire area with subsidized housing. As you know, there's the one side that has the homes that were built by the governor the government and then on the other side option was you buy a trailer if you want to and then you build your homes have you been in that area less than 25 houses have been built by and at the time the senators were saying people can build their own homes people who live in areas like that it is very difficult for them to get the financing to build their homes here we are now in hurricane season and there are people still living in those trailers in castle Burke hurricane season and we can only pray so my recommendation is no do not transfer as is certified demolished homes to people because they're going to be there 30 years from now when none of us are around perhaps you that's a great
- 1:50:08 liability that's just my advice based on historical evidence and experience they in good faith they want to and they said they were going to build we want to we don't want the homes that are going to be built on the other side because they're going to be small they're not going to look good you know um we want to build our own homes our you know 250 000 300 000 homes still living in those trailers 33 years later how many bricks you could buy one a day for 33 years think about it so that's that's that i just want to say that don't do that thank you for that um the other the other thing that was concerning to me was was what was concerning my colleagues my two colleagues before mentioned about this

deconcentration of poverty um i see this with a lot of agencies that have relationships with the federal government of course and it seems as if we don't do a good job of negotiating explaining to the federal agencies that life in the Virgin Islands is different. Incomes in the Virgin Islands are different. So, do we ever make... One minute. You know, it's like we're between a rock and a hard place, right? Correct. So, when I saw that you said maddening, that that also jumped out at me. And then you said too that it's impractical because of the abundance of very low and extremely low-income individuals. So, what do we do? Do we just · have you made any efforts in terms of lobbying the federal government through maybe the delegates of Congress and helping us out here locally?

1:52:04 That's where we need help. We're just different. We can't be treated like a state in certain instances and then not as a state in others, correct? That is correct, Senator. And we have this discussion all the time, in particular at our board meetings. Our commissioners, they do voice concern on these numbers and that we do need to assist the families better. I totally agree. One more or just should I, okay, go ahead. The other thing that I want to point out, that's along that line, and I just want to get a status from you. You said you've lobbied Delegate Plaskett's office for increased national funding for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

1:52:52 As set aside, you've also locally lobbied the Bryan administration. That has to do with the Housing Trust Fund? That is correct. Okay. What's the response? Are you getting · is it no response, lukewarm response, maybe? What's the response from the delegates of Congress and from the Bryan administration and also the Housing Finance Authority, because you said you lobbied for an increase in the allocation of your funds. What's the response from these various, well, you know, entities, let's use the word entities. All the entities have agreed, yes, we need it.

1:53:35 there's there's no actual tangibility of it actually come into fruition uh okay director graham has does does the one thing every testimony that we've had since his term here has been for that and senator blyton could attest to it to have the housing trust fund uh funded um there There were some efforts through the Delegate Office at one point, very strongly, but everybody agrees it is needed and we will continue to lobby. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator Maurice-James. Senator Angel-Bulquez, we recognize for your six minutes.

1:54:21 Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, colleagues. afternoon to the listening and viewing audience and good afternoon to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority leadership. I'm gonna start off by asking questions about the strategic plan portion of the housing plan. I know it's broken down into a number of strategic goals whereas we're aligned in 2023 with goal number three but before i dive down into goal number three have we accomplished all the goals in sections one and two mr chair colleagues yes lydia pell uh just briefly looking through uh page 56 of the plan i assume you're referring to uh yes those things that those goals that were listed uh were completed and you're currently on strategic goal number three correct for the year 2023 that is correct okay very well now concerning b the implementation of strategies to reduce accounts and receivables to the benchmark of a two percent um what strategies are in place to effectively communicate and facilitate the reporting of the loss of income by those residents in order to achieve that goal good afternoon Jimmy farmer director of asset management currently the housing authority has in excess of eight hundred ninety eight thousand dollars in outstanding rent that's owed to the authority \$898,000 between both districts.

1:56:17 In terms of meeting the HUD mandated goal of having a 2% rate the housing authority has implemented and continues to work with residents as it relates to repayment plans. The housing authority cannot charge more than a certain percentage to include in that repayment plan so that it doesn't put the household in a financial burden. The Housing Authority will be moving forward with terminating leases should individuals not abide by the repayment plan.

1:56:56 Some of these repayment plans may be \$50, some \$100, \$200, it will vary. But HUD has mandated that we look at our tenant accounts receivables and ensure that we're We're doing everything as an agency to collect the outstanding rent on top of the current rents that are owed because there will be a time when HUD says Mr. Farmer you've got about \$898,000 of outstanding rent on your books. We're going to look at the subsidy that we're providing your agency. When you collect that \$898,000 that's outstanding. We might consider giving you that subsidy back. And so our charge with the residents is engaging with them, making sure that we enter into those repayment programs. We're constantly advising them to enter into the ERAP program, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. There is funding available currently. There are at least 16 individuals who have processed applications. Anywhere from 40 to \$80,000 is outstanding in terms of what's owed to the housing authority. And these are individuals who've gone through the ERAP program. They've been approved. We're simply waiting for the monies. So we're constantly working with the housing finance authority to get those monies to help individuals to avoid homelessness. And in that process, we'll just continue to work with the residents, ensure that they understand that it is important that they pay their rent on time. that families the population that we serve they're going to have some challenges we understand that we get that and we try to meet them where they are and it is very imperative that at any point there is a interruption of their income whether they've had decreased hours whether they've stopped working it's imperative that they come into the management office to engage with the property

manager to let them know what that situation is so that we can rectify the rent 10 times out of 10 And if someone comes in and they've lost their job or they've had a decrease in their hours, they're warranted a rent decrease. And so it's imperative that the resident continuously comes into the property management

1:59:11 office, engage with the property manager, let them know what's going on, to see how best the housing authority can assist. Okay. And I'm assuming you have qualified staff there that would be able to- One minute. These residents, the options of doing all of the above. let me just ask how do you, I'm going to switch gears here, how do you want to ensure or secure efforts for additional funding for your long-term plan when it comes to the implementation of the new projects while still having to deal with current facilities? So a lot of the new money so to speak is a once in a lifetime opportunity that we have been able to realize by leveraging a lot of the disaster recovery funding that we've received from FEMA and CDBGDR that is really the source of how we're gonna be able to redevelop the doubling of the cost of construction right now is a hindrance. It has really taken our plan aback, but we're still moving forward. And I would say the other obstacle we have is the cost of insurance. The increase in insurance is a considerable impact on these redevelopment projects.

2:00:44 And you believe that you'll be able to maintain consistent resident services during the transition of the older public housing to new developments especially facing these funding limitations? How do you plan to track the effectiveness of your resident services during this time? A lot of that is going to be achieved even through the transition of old to new public housing or not even public housing anymore but the transition from public housing to housing choice vouchers the team at resident wellness they're even looking for funding from all kinds of sources they they have time been able to secure funding for various programs even in the old older communities. Mr. Chairman I just have one quick wrap-up question please. Please conclude. Thank you so much Mr. Chair. If you could explain what were the deficiencies in the PHAS and SEMAP assessments that required improvement plans and what specific actions are being taken to address those deficiencies so there are 14 areas in the c-map I could give that information again the chair has asked for a copy of the corrective action plan for both of those programs but just we were discussing rent collection because we have such a high rent collection that is part of our score drop so we do need to collect the rent okay i came in a little late so i i did not hear the chair request that i apologize for that and thank you for the time mr chair thank you senator polquist um let me ask mr farmer in respect to the repayment agreement um i want to go back there because i think that's critical and important you see you have 838 000 in outstanding balance in TARS and you spoke to repayment agreement I believe it is necessary and I agree that every tenant who owes rent should basically be in a process of going through a repayment agreement in terms of the managers collecting the rent because it is critical it is very important that it is

2:03:27 declare that the rent in housing authority is based on 30% of your income minus the utilities. It's critical that people understand that and I really get upset when I see folks going to court in housing when I rent is \$50, \$100, \$150, \$200 and it's so hard out there for many who's trying to get in can get in coming to our offices all of the senators struggling it's hard so it's important that you know the managers stay on top of the tenants in terms of reminding them the importance of paying the rent paying it on time because you know we don't want to serve people on the streets and there's no need for that because it's 30 percent minus utility allowance so there's not a hardship in my opinion that's just my opinion okay so i think is important to remind your residents of the committee we certified the importance of paying the rents on time okay i'm making sure if they are behind for whatever reason get them into a payment agreement asap that way we don't see any of our folks losing apartments as i want to put it on the record so let's affect quickly you recognize for your six minutes thank you mr chair and good afternoon to the VA Housing Authority family.

2:04:49 Mrs. Pell, is it your testimony that we have a housing crisis in the territory? Senator, yes, we do. We do. And I have to concur with you that we have a housing crisis. And I just returned from a Council of State Government meeting and we need to just make it clear that the housing crisis is not unique to the Virgin Islands. But what's different in the Virgin Islands is we are not having collective conversations with regards to a housing crisis. And when I listen to the conversation with regards to other states and what they're doing, they are having the discussions and laying out the plans as to what they want to see for the future. We're not doing that. What we're doing as Virgin Islanders and as leaders in this territory, we are primarily focusing the focus on Virgin Islands housing authority. That is a problem, colleagues. We have to get to the point where Virgin Islands Housing Authority, HFA, the legislature, the executive branch form a think tank, a collaborative, so we can identify what our challenges are with regards to housing in the U.S. Virgin Islands and figure out how we're going to chip away at it. Talking about , that's not the issue that we have. We have a housing crisis and we have to figure it out, figure out how to address it as leaders in the U.S. Virgin Islands. That's what we have to do because what we're doing is you're putting a plan together and when you put your plan together and then you put it out for a couple of weeks

- 2:06:47 and then you say provide comment. We know that we had the storms of 2017, we had the hurricanes of of Marilyn and Hugo and the ain't change. It hasn't changed, but the focus remains on you. And that's my issue with this conversation that we're having this afternoon. We have to change the narrative, we have to. And you know, I'm not one that believe in having these collective discussions and everybody go their separate ways, But at some point, we have to come together in a room and figure out how we're going to utilize our spaces to address the crisis that we have in the territory. Some of our units, I was just sitting here next to my colleague, I ain't sure where he from, Bovoni or Savannah, I ain't sure yet. But he shared with me that some of those buildings were built from 1969.
- 2:07:43 That's just a few years after I was born. Well, I wasn't even born yet, okay? So that's the challenge that we have. So, you know, I think that we have to come to the point. If there's one takeaway that we have to get from this meeting, I don't really have any questions per se. The takeaway from this meeting has to be how are we going to come as a collaborative to have the conversation about what do we do about housing, the housing challenges that we have in the Virgin Islands. I note specifically that you have one home ownership priority program, that's the one at Williams Delight. And I have to agree with my colleague from St. Croix, my female colleague from St. Croix, when she spoke about the fact that those individuals may not own the property, but they still, they have not been able to rebuild. That's why there must be that relationship between hfa and vi housing authority that's why there must be a relationship they got the the executive branch came up with a slice program it briefs well it briefs well but guess what are we truly serving the needs of our people that's my challenge with this whole issue that we have with housing the housing crisis that we have in the virgin islands now i know that um a few years ago about two years a year and a half uh you your there was what do you the urban land institute so that's 2019 2018 2019 and i think 2022. so that that work that i'm talking about sort of started what happened to the work so again i i totally agree with you senator For those reports, we've shared with the DPNR, with Commissioner Oriel for his land and water use plan as well to contribute to that conversation, but there still needs to be that bigger conversation.
- 2:09:45 This plan that we have is such a minute part of what really needs to take place. And the input from the public is so critical for these plans, not just our resident councils that are just forming, but the public. You know, when I came into this housing authority, there used to be so much more input from the public. And we... I congratulate Senator Blyton for having this hearing on the town hall meeting because, Like you said, everything is pushed on the housing authority to try and figure it out, but it really takes all of us. There are so many elements of a family, a person, a household that without all the pieces together it does nothing.
- 2:10:39 It's just a physical component. And I allowed you to use my time because you needed to put it on the record. Just let me wrap up, Mr. Chair, because we have challenges not only with our regular working men and women, we have challenges with individuals who are not working, but most importantly, we also have challenges with our elderly. So what are we really saying? What are we really doing? How are we looking at this again as a whole and not in fractions? it in fractions is not going to allow us to get to where we need to go because once we look at it and we identify the spaces that are available then we will truly know know what needs will not be met looking at you and your team we can't identify what needs are naturally going to be met it's just not possible so you know i just believe that coming out at this meeting we've had discussions over and over with Virgin Islands Housing Authority we need to lead a charge on what the direction is for the future of housing overall housing opportunities in the U.S. Virgin Islands and that is to form that collective collaboration with those other entities to include the executive branch hfe human services all concerned that's that's it thank you mr chair thank you senator fred gregory i want to recognize at this moment the presence of senator novella e francis thank you for your present senator francis um in respect to my last comment um it's a farmer when it comes to the outstanding balance of 800 plus thousand dollars in addition there are two more options also for residents number one for those who are having challenges in terms of maintenance or repair of the building timely repair of the buildings there is two options the first option is abatement I know you spoke about that for some time you go to the manager and you seek
- 2:12:54 abatement for the for the for the deficiencies and secondly if that doesn't work out you can put your money expo account so you do have two other options um in terms of uh assuring that you are being treated fairly now when it comes to the five-year plan and our seniors elderly units uh what the What's your goal for that area of the plan in respect to our seniors and disabled residents? So more immediately is the we are moving forward with our development team to rebuild one segment one phase of the first phase of well actually it's the second phase of the development of estate to to high rise on St. Thomas, um, in that plan, uh, there is a 60 unit senior development that will be, uh, constructed.
- 2:14:01 We expect to close on that development, uh, March of 2024. And in the ancient, you spoke in a testimony about the replacement of Lucinda Merlin home. So that would not be simultaneously correct, it would be after our North Senior home is built. What's the plan? Correct. So that would be after Tutu North Senior is constructed, simultaneously we're looking at the Oswald-Harris court site to look in that open area to do about 40 units there as well to help to transition the

Lucinda Millen families.

- 2:14:47 Okay. Thank you for that, for putting that on the record. Senator Francis, you're recognised for your six minutes. Senator Francis Francis Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to everyone, and thank you for your testimony. I ask a question that was already answered I'll just feel free to stay asked and answered and I'll move on to the next one but I can't help but to weigh in on the discussion in respect to the housing crisis that we're seeing here in the territory and I totally agree with my colleague that this requires all hands on deck for us to be able to have a discussion and put into action our plans to address this housing crisis. The housing crisis is seriously hampering our ability to attract teachers and nurses and first responders as well as to be able to entice employees who will come down here to do construction work and help us in terms of our disaster recovery. This body this body has been working feverishly to address the gaps that we are seeing within our funding we provided funding four million dollars again to assist with the the gap financing as well as we supported the version of our slice program. Imagine we're gloating about VI slice and that we signed one person so far recently in our in our release and the person that we signed individual family that we signed don't look like you and I where was the opportunity for us to showcase that in fact after waiting for all these time for all this time that we'll try to at least at least attract those individuals that we targeted our nurses and teachers and police officers those individuals I was leaving this territory in grand numbers to be able to encourage them to remain here and get
- 2:16:50 home. Shame on all of us that should not have happened. Anyway today we're here to move forward and to really address what we're seeing here. I wanted to ask you Madam COO in respect to tax credit and developers opportunity can you speak to what's being done in that area again to be able to not just go with the usual suspects in terms of the housing developers but any new and innovative discussion being had with our developers for housing in this territory?
- 2:17:34 Senator, there we did lose one developer on St. Croix from the pool of three that we had so there is going to be a new developer RFP that'll be coming out Um, next quarter, uh, so there is an opportunity to have a new developer and as part of our team. Um, additionally, we recently received correspondence from Michael's development that they will be, uh, liquidating their properties in the territory. So there, there needs to be a discussion. Um, again, based on, uh, the Senator's comments as to how we really look at these opportunities and be more creative on how we're going to handle the need for housing and move forward. Uh, right now, uh, we are continuing with our redevelopment plan, but we're, we're looking for options, uh, in order to increase because remember one as part of the testimony, even though we do the redevelopment we're not adding any new units yeah that is a situation and I know that my colleague just spoke about the seniors senior home is there any real discussion being had any tangible immediate earmark that we're seeing in respect to a seniors home being constructed I'm here in the territory so the first senior home is being 2024 new senior home to to north and then we will be proceeding when we get the new developer on board to move forward with the stony ground development on St. Croix across from the
- 2:19:35 stop-and-shop area okay and in regards to the the housing crisis that we are seeing here and I know that you have been working with within the Section 8 program to address you know some of that waiting list on the backlog I know that there was also a discussion sometime back where there was an opportunity along with the I think it might have been the CDBG funding to be able to assist renters with development of well build out of facilities in the neighborhood of about fifty thousand dollars and be able to build out their home as an agreement that they will actually in allow them to be in the rental inventory. Have we made any inroads or any improvement on that? That program is with the Housing Finance Authority you are correct and it's fifty \$30,000 to make improvements on your home to house a family on our HCV waiting list. Very little in progress has been made on that. We are continuing to talk to the Housing Finance Authority to expand and move that program with greater capacity and again we launched off the thousand dollar incentive for landlords. That's, that's one that is going to expire or scheduled to expire December, 2023.
- 2:21:03 So we do want landlords to be able, as we're seeing some of the units coming back online that were previously Airbnb units, that, that thousand dollar incentive is a, is a good incentive and we should hope that landlords would take advantage of it. Very well. Very well. I'll thank you for your response Mr. Chair. I heard my time call but if you could just ask the Madam COO if the \$50,000 with the CDBG is something that VI Housing Authority would be interested in doing and perhaps we could approach them and see if in fact that they could also join in as a partner to hopefully move the needle and being able to have been approached by several renters that's interested in that program. I'm not really making any headways with HFA, but VIA will be interested in doing that as well. Thank you very much for the time. Thank you, Senator Francis. Do you want to respond to that? CEO Opel.
- 2:22:05 Senator, great idea. As long as we can get the capacity for our employees to assist with the movement of that We will be more than happy to, and I would need to get that confirmation from Mr. Graham. Okay, very well. I want to recognize the presence of Senator Samuel Carrion. Welcome, Senator. Thanks for being here.

- 2:22:35 CEO Pell, I know that in terms of housing, I heard you speak about the bright path. Can you speak a little bit about that please and what would that implementation look like? Emanuela Perez, the Bright Path program is the model that we use to engage residents through wellness assessments, community needs assessments and being able to strategically be able to support them by connecting them to the correct resources in the community to support their needs through our eight dimensions of wellness a dimension of wellness go to them for me please do you know them ahead i think so go ahead we've got academic wellness vocational wellness spiritual wellness financial wellness okay environmental wellness occupational wellness and And who is responsible for carrying out those responsibilities?
- 2:23:55 The entire team. So we utilize our resident wellness coordinators to provide the wellness assessments. We're utilizing our section three employees to be able to conduct the needs assessments. marketing individual is making sure that all of the information and requests that we're identifying through these assessments are available and communicated clearly with the residents our community-based support person is ensuring that the resident councils have this information also to share with the residents but also bring back information referrals or self-referrals to the team so it is a whole team working together to ensure that we help our residents become well within their own personal lives in personal areas okay thank you for that senator carrion you recognize for your six minutes thank you thank you mr chair and good afternoon to you members of the u.s virgin Allen's testifiers and my colleagues. I want to thank you Mr. Chair for having this hearing this afternoon and I also want to thank the team for their presentation today. I like many of my colleagues I'm also deeply concerned about the status of our public housing units in the territory and I think this is a reason why the annual plan is so important because it really lays out the map on the way the path forward and our needs in the territory. I want to echo also sentiments of my colleagues before me and I was having this conversation also with my good colleague over from the District of St. Thomas we also able to participate in the Council of State Government Conference where this was one of the topics that were presented and housing crisis is not unique to the
- 2:25:52 Virgin Islands it's nationally but it's also universal is an issue that various countries and government officials have been discussing and it really has to be tackled like all my colleague mentioned all hands on deck there has to be a commitment to make the changes necessary to ensure that we have affordable housing for everyone so I think it's important because when we have a broken housing spectrum then we are going to end up with issues within our community as homelessness and some other societal problems so I think it's important that we really understand the urgency in this matter and that we move forward and resolving it and it's not won't resolve just by one agency one person we really have to do a collective effort in order to really make an impactful change in the territory. So I want to thank you for your presentation today and I do have some questions. I know you mentioned a few things and I was out because I just landed this afternoon back here in its territory. But Tio, Ms. Pell, what would you say it's your biggest challenge to a trolley currently in housing? Senator one thing? Yeah your main one I know you have maybe a tons but a few of them but what would you say is the main issue being able to provide that truly safe decent and sanitary place for people to live and to be to to grow as families I think I think that yeah it it brings all the components together but it is a challenge it is it is a huge challenge because all those pieces bring what is truly housing and and that why is that challenges is it a funding issue is it
- 2:28:28 it having the capacity is it not having the developers investors what do you attribute that to it's several things it's it's everything you've said and more again it really goes back to what Senator Donna for Gregory brought to the floor is being able to, as a community, really deal with the housing crisis. Got you. Question, did the housing has already notified the tenants of today's meeting within their respective community as an avenue for them to hear what's happening and directly know the areas that they've been affected and be aware of the discussions that we're having?
- 2:29:21 Uh, the housing authority, um, didn't specifically, uh, advertise this meeting, but I know Senator Biden, uh, has coordinated with us to do town hall meetings on August 30th and again, as HUD requires, we will be, we have been advertising the public hearing on September 5th. Well, I think it's important also. One minute. and be able to hear firsthand apart from the town hall but be able to connect and understand what's happening. And how many of your housing communities have active resident advisory boards in their communities? And please excuse me if this was asked before. Emanuela Perez-Cacias, currently we have three resident councils onboarded within our community and we anticipate three elections next week monday tuesday and wednesday so by the end of 2023 there will be six online resident councils okay that's it that's that's important how many should we have in all we're going to have at the end of 2024 we've got six this year six coming on next year so we will have 12 at the end then we will begin to look at our new developments and our redevelopments in creating resident councils in those spaces. In those developments okay very well because of course they have a role to play and their input I think is crucial as we move forward with improving housing within our territory. Also with regards to your community centers are they being utilized for community programs after school programs what's the status for those? Emanuela Perez-Cacias Senator, currently we are working with our different partners within the community to utilize our community spaces to bring the wider community service into our communities. Before, strategically, we were utilizing them as basis for direct services that we provided to

residents. Now we are systematically looking at the spaces and partnering with agencies like the Virgin Islands Department of Education, gun violence prevention for them

2:31:32 to bring their services directly into our communities. So currently you don't have any activities happening, you're working towards that, but there's nothing going on at this moment? No, at this moment we were, first we had to get our community centers in a space where we're able to partner with individuals. And now we are actively putting things in place, so we have conversation happening right now with the Department of Education to bring a satellite adult education program into one of our community centers in the Marley Homes in Fredrickston. in Frederickstead and we will continue to build that out and grow are any of those technology ready like have computers or available for residents to utilize do you have anything within community with that availability not currently but we like I said we first got this space together and now we're going to put all of the materials in place to be able to build out those spaces but we have identified funding senator to be able to do so to be able to do that yes that's that's and what about most of your communities of course have basketball courts or some other type of sports uh facility or some of some sort uh in them what activities if any are a partnership are you doing to be able to provide that to community members again we are open for partnership at the virgin islands housing authority so we are working with every agency to combine our resources to provide a level of stable supports within our communities so courts getting done upgraded all of these things have been put in place and now like i said we're open for partnership okay so hopefully next time around when you come back we'll hear that there are some mous some engagements and actually some programs happening um in these housing communities correct definitely similar okay very well i think my time was called and i I don't want to abuse it. So I want to thank you guys for providing the presentation today and thank Mr. Chair for your leniency.

2:33:35 Thank you so much, Senator Samuel Carrion, your time being called. But thank you. Very good discussion. I want to recognize the presence of Senator Dan Kiphar. Welcome Senator. Let me ask, before I go to your point of information, let me ask in respect to the community centers i know when it comes to the community centers we are there of course for the members of the community i know in the past we worked the management worked with all of the tenant councils to create programs in those centers because of course they are engaged with the residents on a daily basis i think you need to actually talk to the tenant council resident councils first before you go elsewhere. This is their community, this is their centre. Please work with those members and I'm sure they can and do and have been providing engaging programs for their residents.

2:34:36 It's only right. So please do that. Do not forget them. Thank you Senator. And before I go to you, I just want to remind the public again of the town hall meeting that's being hosted by this committee on all three islands on August 30th from 6 to 8 p.m. It's very important in terms of the housing plan, the five-year plan, and that the residents have an input in this plan. So this is for the residents. Again, August 30th, 6 to 8th on St. Thomas St. John and St. Croix in the chambers of all three districts. Thank you Thank you so much. Senator Mariciam, do you recognise for your point of information? Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2:35:21 I realised that in our conversation about William's Delight that I recommended not doing the sale. So if they're demolished, what are you going to do with the plots? Yeah, I, Lydia Pell, I realized we didn't get to that part. Yes, so to maintain the affordability of being able to be a homeowner, what we have decided is that when we demolish those homes, we're going to sell the lots, we're going to re-subdivide and sell lots.

2:35:58 And I said that because it triggered when my colleague spoke about, you know, coming from the summit that she attended and how other states are doing different things, I remembered that in Boston, and so I just wanted to offer this to you, the Housing Authority and Housing Finance Authority, I wrote it down, they actually offered vacant lots to developers for free if they use them for affordable housing and so we and then what they did was I mean this this of course you'd have to go begging I guess for the ARPA funding but they then used the 60 million in ARPA funding um to then open you know open the the lots for affordable housing and it and the 60 million was a grant program again that provides up to 50 000 and then what they also did was the boston housing authority launched the first home program which provides eligible um residents with down payment assistance of 75 000 and i'm just wondering sometimes you know lawyers don't believe in reinventing the wheel if you look at other states like my female colleague from Sindamas was saying right that you just look at the states and see what they're doing and then just use it if and if you follow michelle wu of the mayor of the city of boston you will see how effective these programs have been and if you if you said to a developer here's a vacant lot you bill for free you bill and then you sell they make the money you get the property taxes they you know they get the the sale proceeds and it works out for

2:37:54 everyone so I'm just putting that out there in the universe of the Virgin Islands that we really need to be creative and as she said collaborative and and you know agencies working together we really really need to do this it's not going to solve the whole issue that we have but at least we'll put a little dent, you know, in the home ownership, and we'll provide

people. Also to my colleague on St. Croix, about the VI Slice, yes, you're correct. It's not working.

2:38:27 We need to call them in and talk about the VI Slice, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Maurice James. Point of information, Senator Fred Gregory. Thank you Mr. Chair, and just to piggyback on my colleague from St. Croix, female colleague, you know we recently heard the white discussion around the derelict buildings here in the Virgin Islands and you know what the approach is as it relates to you know the way forward again Again, this has to be a collective discussion. All of it is related. It's all part of how do we move forward with the housing crisis in the territory.

2:39:15 We continue to do things in silos and in these fragments and then you leave a whole group of people out. And that's just not going to work for us. So I just want to make sure we put this information, these concerns on the record, because all of us have an obligation to figure out how we're going to move forward with this. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Fred Gregory, and I do concur. Senator Tan Kepa, do you recognize for your six minutes? Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would say good afternoon to my colleagues, good afternoon to the people of the Virgin Islands. afternoon to miss Pell and your team I just came over from St. Thomas attending meetings and I didn't even get to hear the testimony but when I heard that housing was here I could not stay in my office because one thing that really touches me and I am it's dear to me one of my colleagues talked about the opportunity for individuals owning their home and specifically the Williams Delight area and I would like to hear about some timelines if if possible if you can let us know you're saying that individuals would be able to the homes would be demolished what would be the timeline after being demolished and individuals would have the opportunity to purchase a lot miss Pell so Lydia Pell yesterday's board meeting our board was able to approve for the demolition

2:41:06 application for a hundred units Williams delight to be submitted to HUD that process takes about 45 to 60 days. Once we received that approval, we already engaged architectural engineering firm that had already started on the drawings for the demolition of the 100 units. Time frame to have that complete is probably within the next year year and a half to be able to sell those lots because there there has to be a new subdivision map that has to be submitted and approved through the Department of Planning and Natural Resources even after the demolition has occurred for us to be able to sell those lots the lots have to be appraised and the value has to be established for the sale of those lots We have several individuals that have already purchased and actually already have a list of individuals who are just waiting for lots. So the time frame is between one and a half, two years. Okay, so my question as you just said that, where there's going to be a whole new infrastructure. Williams Delight has experienced a lot of issue with stormwater. Is that going to be addressed as far as you know with times change, you have ponds that are filled with debris that used to catch the water before it get into Williams Delight. So how is that going to also be addressed to address this stormwater issues that Williams delight has been experiencing for years yes so as part of that redevelopment and

2:43:12 homeownership sale we have coordinated our our civil engineers have coordinated with both waste management authority and the Department of Public Works as they did the redesign for the sidewalks improvements the new subdivision look for Williams delight which includes a subdivision of the vacant lots we have already master plan that okay so I don't know how many housing facilities you oversee but I'm sure that this is one of the issues that I understand that happens in a lot of the housing areas as it pertains to mold how do you address more remediation so more more remediation is something that we handle on a case by case basis our staff continues to assist families that have more or complaints of more sometimes it requires the families to be transferred while the abatement or the cleanup is being done but But it's something that we are, as we do the physical inspections, which in our last hearing, we said we'll be increasing from just the one inspection of units.

2:44:40 We're now going to be increasing inspections on units to four inspections. One minute. Annually. So things like more will be caught in a quicker timeframe. it doesn't become as big an issue in an apartment as it is now do you do your mold remediation with your staff that you have or do you hire a private company to do the mold remediation no we we hire a third-party company to do more remediation 30 seconds they do have to identify that it is mold Ms. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Ms. Pell.

2:45:21 Ms. Thank you, Senator Capehart. I have a point of information from Senator Fred Gregory, and then I have a point of information from Senator Maurice James. Ms. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just a follow-up on the Macaulay from Sincere, the previous speaker's question about the selling of the lots. So are Are there provisions to build within a certain time period on these lots that will become available? Senator, that is a good question. If you can add the comment to the PHA plan that we have in front of us.

2:46:05 We have to, that's like a lesson learned. That would be awesome. You have to have provisions. We need to put a provision in place. Yes, because, you know, I could buy a lot. Somebody could buy a lot. I could save the lot for my great-granddaughter. That's not the intent of moving forward with selling the lots. The purpose of selling the lots is to provide homeownership. And then that brings me to this other concern then. So if that's not in consideration, then what is

the relationship?

- 2:46:40 what are we saying about if you are able to purchase a lot then are we looking at the affordability of or the ability is the word not affordability of the ability of that individual to in fact afford to then build a home to go to the bank are they qualifying on the other level to go to the bank to build a home because we again it goes back to that collaborate All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
- 2:47:07 Let me hear your response. Thank you, Senator Fred Gregory. Senator James, Maryse James, mic please. We were thinking exactly alike. I was going to say to you, are you going to put restrictions because, remember I just spoke about Castleburg, those lots were sold in 1998 by Governor Roy Lester Snyder, may he rest in peace, and they are still vacant. So exactly what the Senator said was what I was going to say to you. You need to put restrictions, and again, it goes to, can they afford to build?
- 2:47:59 So, we're on the same track with that. You need to be very careful, and that's why I offered the suggestion of maybe offering it to developers who can build, free, who can build affordable housing, and then they then sell it to these people on a certain terms. That's, we're actually here trying to work this problem out for, we're just offering suggestions. Yes, and that's what the plan is about. I can't say that enough.
- 2:48:29 Is there any way for us to get a copy of the layout, the map? The master plan? Through the chair, I'd like to request. We can share it. Thank you. For William's delight. Thank you. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senator Maurice James. Let me ask, in respect to your testimony, you spoke to plans for landlords' participation. What does that look like in terms of encouraging more landlords to join the program in terms of Section 8, the HVAC program?
- 2:49:12 Because I know you spoke also about \$1,000, how are you advertising that also? are using social media to advertise a lot especially that particular program but we what the staff at the housing choice voucher program is doing they have individual landlord sessions and those are scheduled I don't recall how often but they they are having individual sessions with landlords that they're actually inviting them to come uh be trained on how the program works and and so that they totally understand uh the the good parts about being a landlord on the hcv program let's put it that way and how are you advertising homeownership through um the section a program the age that program for individuals who wants to um be in that program how are you advertising that um right now in particular because uh williams elite is our um our one home ownership site as we work uh with our development team that actually works with each individual family they are they are trained and the information is shared with them about FSS and different means of how the affordability of purchasing a home is done and there's actually a brochure that we created for them and we're getting ready to do another session in the next two weeks and we do this one stop sessions with those individuals at williams delight as frequent as we see possible what about those who are on a regular section a program who won that opportunity
- 2:51:09 in terms of the first five year the red brand going to our escrow account is that program still available yes that that is part of uh our training for the individuals at williams delight and you also spoke to increasing the inspections to fall annually so is that for housekeeping inspection is that for hqs inspection can you clarify for me please good afternoon jimmy farmer director of asset management that includes housekeeping inspections as well as the regular upcs inspection quarterly or quarterly quarterly four times a year yes do you have the staffing for that currently we do have a shortage within asset management but we will be moving forward with the current staffing levels that we have in order to meet that objective and that's realistic in your opinion for it must happen okay there's no option that must happen and what does the preventative part of that looks like in terms of following up with those deficiencies and are showing that they are addressed in a timely fashion?
- 2:52:20 Correct. Ensuring that the preventative maintenance plan is implemented will be critical as it relates to reducing the amount of time it takes to turn vacant units, as well as minimizing the cost to turn that vacant unit. That is why the preventative maintenance plan is implemented. Okay, very well, colleagues, we're going to do a rapid round. I'm going to give everyone two minutes to ask on whatever inquiries they have. So we're going to start another round.
- 2:52:52 We're going to start another round, starting with Senator DeGraff. Senator DeGraff, you reckon? I apologize. Senator Joseph, you're recognized for your point of information. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for recalling that I had asked a long time for the point of information. My point of information surrounds a issue that I know that previous individuals and senators, my colleagues, had asked about a plan.
- 2:53:30 Does the housing authority provide input on the consolidated plan for the territory? Senator, yes. We are one of the persons that are interviewed or agencies that are interviewing when interviewed when this plan is... And with, just, I won't belabor the issue, but when was the last consolidated plan put together by the Housing Finance Authority? Because I remember years ago I had assisted in doing that when I was a consultant and that would have been the turn of the century. So when was that consolidated plan put together? When was the last one?

- 2:54:13 I believe it's 2015. 2015. Okay. Thank you kindly. Ms. Pell. Thank you, Senator Joseph. Senator Francica, are you recognized for your two minutes? Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Couple questions. How have the audits of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority been for the last few years? Can you speak to your audits?
- 2:54:47 Senator Cecile Foy, for the last five, six years, we always have clean audits. Our audits are always unmodified, sir. Clean audits. Boy, that's good. like my flow in my house. Okay the cisterns. One question on the cisterns. Do you still have the cisterns as an emergency backup and do you still have a plan to keep the cisterns for drinking water or what's your plans with the cisterns water? Lydia Pell, all the cisterns The different housing communities will be recommissioned as we go through the redevelopment of those sites.
- 2:55:37 Mayor Mrakas- Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the time. Mayor Mrakas- Thank you, Senator Fonseca. Senator De Graff? Can I have two minutes? Senator De Graff- Thank you, Mr. Chair. The housing keep doing what you're doing though, I support you 100%, why do you know that? The low-income housing, I guess it's a subsidy, that you're talking about building a senior facility. If the federal government pays for it 100%, the threshold for the income stays at a certain lower level. If the government were to put in X amount of dollars, does it allow for a little raising of that subsidy level or that level for the individuals who would be occupying the facility. If housing presently bills it off of your funds, your income level for residents are at one, or I guess stays at the lowest or whatever. So to raise it a little, to allow maybe for more Virgin Islanders with a little higher subsidy based on what's happening now, Now, if the government, the local government now does basically a match, could that allow for that where you can get individuals who income a little bit higher to sustain them? Or it just have to stay at that lowest level that HUD sets forth? That's a tricky question.
- 2:57:16 No, I guess even if it got to be offline, then we could follow up on it. But I was just looking at in terms of how the income levels are being either pushed up or you leave. If it's a collaboration between the local government and federal government, then that automatically will take that level up and is subsidized by the local government. So I guess if it's too hard to answer now, we just pick up it offline. Right. So one of the things as you discussed the income. So you're talking going from low-income housing to moderate or middle-income families being able to house those individuals with a slightly higher income? That's what you're referring to? It would be like that, but again, I don't want to, I just take it up to that higher level.
- 2:58:10 but the issue that heard that you read in the testimony is saying where the levels have to come up where we gonna charge you more rent because of your over income versus that so that over income that you are seeing I don't think it would put you in a middle class and that higher but would that help that area there that's what we're trying to figure it should so we we can have a a further discussion on how that can help. So, any monies you can give to that? I have something brilliant. I'll come here and talk about it. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senator Fonseca. Senator DeGraff, thank you so much for your line of Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going after the real savonero I heard. Okay, my question is quick. The home ownership, the vouchers for home ownership, those vouchers can be used for a long time? I mean, is there a time limit? How does that work? That's my first question i have another quick question too you know where you talk on page seven about the homeowner section eight homeownership they can use their vouchers for home ownership does that mean that the voucher that they would use for the rent they would now use for the mortgage is that what that means uh senator i'm not well versed on that but uh yeah we can provide a response for you on that yeah miss anthony was here she would be able to be a better response
- 2:59:56 on that yeah but it's i'd like that because that entire paragraph i'd like clarification because you talk about combining that with the vi slice correct so if she can reach out to me or one minute here correct um i'd appreciate that okay there is language and a plan um that was drafted in that segment and we can have a, we'll send you our clarification. Okay. I'll look, I'll definitely look at that because that's important in helping people get home ownership. And then, you know, earlier you spoke about security deposit and I think sometimes people don't realize if they keep the premises or the property in good condition, they get back their security deposit. correct correct because it's just a matter of making sure that they keep the property in good condition and all you look at is ordinary wear and tear and they get the money back that is correct yeah i want to get that across and then i want to say to the people on st croix who grew up in ralph de chabot project it's no longer there um that's not a subject but this weekend we're We're having a meet and greet tomorrow and then a fun day on Saturday at the basketball court that still exists and the basketball court that's responsible for my getting my basketball scholarship to GW. So I'm going to be there and make sure that all of the people who went through Ralph D.
- 3:01:29 Shabert, housing communities, what you call them now, come out and spend the day with us down at Shabert. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much, Senator Maurice James. Senator Angel Bocas, you recognize for your two minutes? Thank you, Mr. Chair. My critical burning question today is how does the Housing Authority plan to deal with the insurance premium increases that they're going to be experiencing for the next fiscal year? and how that's going to impact

the sustainability of their operations, and if they're going to plan to seek funding, do they have a figure associated with that?

3:02:24 Senator Cecile Tung Foy, currently our annual insurance is roughly about over a million dollars. Please, please recognize the mic of Ms. Foy. Thank you, Cecile Tong Foy. As I was saying, Senator, annually, Vija pays approximately about \$1.1 million for its property insurance um and about two hundred thousand more um for its other insurance insurance one minute those expenditures are um offset by our annual operating subsidy and of course one of the things that's important and one um co appellant um director graham um is passionate about is reducing or water consumption so by doing that we'll be able to of course absorb any other additional insurance expenditures because of what we're going through and the plan that the organization has for the future and how much has that insurance premium spiked within the past few years do you have those numbers or percentages um last for fiscal year 2020 to 23 it rolls over into two year spans it has remained um the 1.1 million for property which is the most significant of our insurance premiums okay very well and when it comes before my time expires when it comes to

3:04:16 the williams delight uh housing can can you provide more detail about the structural and architectural implications that have been conducted on those properties? So a lot of the homes if you're familiar with them some of them have crack floors and and crack bond beams so that was part of the structural analysis that was done. Some of them are near the huge stormwater drainage and so we've seen a lot of shift in the floor slabs because the construction is is really four inch panels on top of a slab on grade, a five inch slab and grade. So there's no footing for those homes. So the architectural component stabilizes a lot of what the existing already has. Okay very well because my office has gotten calls about about those people who live in the area that seem to believe that they would like to still remain in the home that they have. But that's another discussion for another time. Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair.

3:05:44 Thank you, Senator Borges. Before I go to Senator Joseph, Ms. Perl, let me ask you in respect to your expenses. And I know you have spoken to the high cost of water. And I know in the housing communities, we have a lot of water lost, not only from the residents, mainly for many broken lines with your capital funds, have you put aside funds to address this most important topic because I know it impacts your bottom line. So what have we done in that respect? So right now we're looking at, again, as Ms. Foy, indicating reducing the water consumption at various properties.

3:06:35 What we have done is re implement the system with individual water meters and remote reading that was damaged after hurricanes Alma and Maria. So those systems are backup functioning. So we are the, we are able to individually monitor at Estee Bovoni, Nolza Contant, Marley Holmes, and Ario Diaz, and now we're adding Walter M. Hodge.

3:07:08 Since Tutu High Rise is offline, have you seen a significant decrease or is the bill still high? There is no bill. No, I mean overall. Oh, overall? No, still a increase, even with Tutu offline. Still an increase, see, that goes to my point. There is a serious problem in terms of... Per unit, it's relative. It's still too high. I agree. How much you say?

3:07:43 Annually, VEHA pays approximately \$6 million in water. \$6 million annually? Yes, sir. That's a problem, yeah. Yes. Really, really, really, you have to do a real analysis and exactly find out exactly where the problem lies. Because I remember when you did the initiative back in Tutu High Rise, when we actually changed all those lines and we actually found what the problem was. So how can you do that overall in terms of that \$6 million price tag?

3:08:19 That's hefty. You need to make some type of investment to really address that. And we are. Right now, Oswal Harris Court, Mount Pleasant, Marley, those three sites, Content Noles, we just finished, and Michael J. Corwin Terrace. We've had several line, main line breaks over the last couple of months. So we are going back and doing the analysis like we did at Aria-Diaz and to high-rise. Aria-Diaz is a prime example. We replaced, I think we spent like \$1.2 million. That bill right now, monthly, is under \$10,000. You see, it's worth the investment. It is.

3:09:07 It paid itself back in two years. Wow, thank you for that. Senator Joseph, you recognize for your two minutes? Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to commend the CFO of the Housing Authority. I noted on page three that you have had an exceptional balance sheet, has resulted in not one or two or three, but whole five years of clear audits, no findings positive cash flow adequate reserves and all vendors paid within 30 days i wish our central government was doing that okay so maybe you uh should be able to train a team on how to do it because it's showing not one or two but whole five years of consistent clean audits now i want to go now and ask on the second paragraph on that same page because you know we talk about one minute the collection of the rents for persons who owe rent but i know from living in public housing that we have an issue with the repair of the units and that's why a lot of the residents don't feel compelled to pay their rent because they're really living in squalor. They call, they put in the work orders, et cetera. You don't get any response. And I visited a number of my former neighbors and see the conditions.

3:10:47 So kindly indicate for me quickly, what is the completion or turnaround time for a work order now? Good afternoon. Jimmy Farmer, Director of Asset Management. the Housing Authority has about 1,980 open work orders in the system.

HUD standard is for regular routine work orders to be completed within 20 days, emergency work orders within 24 hours. Because we have the backlog of open work orders, we're looking to condense that down to be able to have the staff meet the HUD mandated standard of completing work quarters within 20 days or less housing authorities across the u.s. are operating within that hud standard time frame and the virgin islands housing authority is moving towards that as well thank you so much mr chairman i won't go any further but that's one of the main reasons and i'm sure everyone knows why the residents are not paying their rent because they're living in in substandard housing for some extent, and they have worked outstanding for a long period of time. Thank you kindly, Mr. Chairman, for the leeway.

3:12:03 Thank you. Senator Joseph. Senator Fred Gregory, you recognize for your two minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to go back to the Williamsy Light matter. Do you have opportunities to seek out a developer and possibly do a turnkey project with the uh, program with Williams delight. Senator, we did one reiteration of that. We could share, uh, that, uh, that with you. Um, but again, when we get the new developer, that's something we can look into. Yeah.

3:12:38 I really think that that's the direction we should go in. Now, um, are there any, I know that you have four priorities on a part of, some part of your testimony made reference to Williams delight being the four priorities. Um, do, We don't have any home ownership opportunities in the St. Thomas-St. John District? No, but we did reference in a testimony that Oswell-Harris Court Resident Council has requested to have that opportunity and we just need some funding from your committee. Okay, and then, and then Lucinda Millenholme, what are we doing with Lucinda Millenholme? We've discussed it and discussed it and we haven't seen a movement. We saw where they knocked down some buildings right there by the old McDonald's, by a, a, old housing finance, Harris court. What's happening there? What's going on? So once, so to two senior that's coming online, uh, the starting construction 2024, completion 2026, uh, we're going to be, uh, starting some of the transition for Lucinda Millen families but at the end of the day that that site is going to be demolished and some reconstruction on that site.

3:13:58 What do you mean by some reconstruction? What I mean, what the plan is? There's some plan to do a commercial with residential, bottom floor commercial with residential. Mixed use? Mixed use. All of that came from the Urban Land Institute recommendations. okay uh well thank you mr chair thank you for the opportunity to have this discussion today i believe that this discussion does not need to rest here with our our conversation this evening i really believe that we need to put together a some sort of a collaborate so we could continue this conversation so we could figure out really what and how do we move forward with uh the housing crisis here in the territory. So thank you for the opportunity.

3:14:45 Thank you Senator Fred Gregory. Senator Carrion, you're recognized for your two minutes. Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chair. I read here in your testimony that the last housing demand study was done in 2015. Are you projected to have anyone soon and how frequently do you have these housing demand studies? The housing demand study is the responsibility of the housing finance authority. So it typically is every five years. So we haven't had one since 2015. That is correct. I know the housing finances is in the process of getting one done. Okay. And back then our housing need was 5,000 units and it's your estimate that that might have been increased by 20% to today, right? That is correct.

3:15:47 What is the conversation about new housing additional to the territory? Because I know we've been talking about replacing the old obsolete buildings that we have, some of them 60 years old, but I'm not hearing conversation about new. So so the new housing is is not going to the redevelopment plan for the housing authority is not gonna bring any new housing like additional units it'll it is simply updating and making the buildings more resilient for the the housing communities that we have now. And what's the reason for not having a new additional housing are we advocating for it we we are advocating for it again it's it's money you know right now we have like a once in a once in a lifetime opportunity because we're able to leverage tax credits and other um financing uh we just recently received two 1.5 million dollars awards from the Federal Home Loan Bank just this week but that now funds have to be leveraged and are able to be leveraged with disaster and FEMA funding and without those funding availability we would not be able to do these redevelopments. I hear you and just in closing it was a chair so some of challenge I also see is if we have to replace and rebuild some of these old housing units we're gonna put the people that are in there now if there's no new housing being developed so it becomes a challenge and you find these individuals unwilling to move and leave for example Kennedy and so we really need to push for having some additional new development as we continue to repair replace what we have um so i also look forward to continuing having this conversation uh with you and other stakeholders because we really need to um get a handle of this

3:17:58 um for future generations and for currently for our issues that we're having currently so thank you mr chair thank you senator carrion i believe that these are the conversations we have been having throughout this term and especially today a housing summit is in order and my co-chair and i will spearhead that because I think it's very important to do such an initiative at this time because we are in a crisis when it comes to our housing stock but I would like to thank the Virgin Islands housing authority and all of my colleagues for participating in this hearing this afternoon because there to me

there is no more important issue than affordable housing This has been a critically important meeting, both for its own sake and because it sets the stage for more robust public discussion on the annual plan in the upcoming town hall on August 30th on all three islands, all three islands.

- 3:18:58 I strongly encourage all Virgin Islanders, especially residents of public housing communities, Choice Vulture recipients to pay close attention to this hearing and to the town halls on August 30th and to weigh in and make your voice heard during the comment period. September 5th, I believe, is the last for public comments. And I know that our tenants are very vocal and are always involved. So I know that you know this is our community and we have a collective power to make a tremendous difference in how things are done here in the territory. But we must speak up and demand those things we want and ask for decent quality housing and a better quality of life for all Virgin Islanders. I know that the chambers in St. Croix will be spearheaded by my co-chair, Senator Maurice James, the conference room in St. Croix, I'm sorry, the conference room in St. John by Senator Angel Bulquist, another committee member, and here in this district by myself. And all of my colleagues will be present to assist. And I want to thank the general public in advance especially the housing residents for coming out CEO Opel I'm going to give you one minute to make a closing statement to the general public I'd like to say thank you again for this opportunity for the housing authority to present its FY 2024 annual plan and five-year plan we look forward to to seeing you at the town hall meeting and again at our public hearing on September 5th. Please come out and support what we have put in the plan and provide your input and any additions that you think would help to make housing in the territory a lot better. Thank you.
- 3:21:09 Thank you. Thanks to our staff. Thank you. I want to thank my colleagues, media, security, the stenographers and thank everyone that took part in this hearing. The Committee on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunication is hereby recess. The Committee on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunication is hereby adjourned. You did well, you did well.
- 3:21:43 This is great, huh? Thank you. You [3 such phrases repeated 10 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

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.

- 12x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice James
- 10x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
heard in this transcript as: De Graff, DeGraff, Duane M. DeGraff
- 9x **Senator Carla Joseph**
the surname alone also matches: Clifford Joseph; Karla J. Joseph
heard in this transcript as: Joseph
- 8x **Senator Ray Fonseca**
heard in this transcript as: Fonseca, Fonseca's, Marie Fonseca, Rae Fonseca
- 7x **Senator Fred Gregory**
the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
- 6x **Senator Samuel Carrion**
heard in this transcript as: Carrion, Carrione, Samuel Carrione
- 5x **Senator Marvin Blyden**
heard in this transcript as: Blyden, Blyton
- 3x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bulquez Jr., Angel L. Bolques Jr., Bulquez
- 3x **Senator Novelle Francis**
heard in this transcript as: Francis
- 2x **Senator Angel Boquist**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bolquist, Bolquist

- 2x **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bocas
- 2x **Senator Angel L. Borges Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Borges
- 2x **Senator Angel L. Bullquist Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bulquist
- 2x **Senator Diane T. Capeheart**
heard in this transcript as: Capehart
- 2x **Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriel**
heard in this transcript as: Oriel
- 2x **Senator Marvin A. Blighton**
- 1x **Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna Fred Gregory
- 1x **Senator Donna Frett-Gregory**
heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Frett-Gregory