

**PRESENTATION OF ACTING DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL
PATRICIA LYNN PRYOR
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE'S TESTIMONY
THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
IN RE: BILL NO. 36-0099**

Good Morning, Senate President Milton E. Potter, Senators, legislative staff, and the listening and viewing audience. I am Acting Deputy Attorney General Patricia Lynn Pryor. It is my pleasure to appear before you today to address Proposed Bill No. 36-0099. Thank you for including the Department of Justice in this very important discussion.

The Office of the Attorney General supports this Bill to strengthen the tools that the People of the Virgin Islands can utilize in prosecuting elder fraud, abuse and exploitation cases.

The Department of Justice serves as the attorney for the People of the Virgin Islands, and I personally serve as the Director for the White-Collar Crime and Public Corruption Division. I have had the unfortunate responsibility of prosecuting those individuals who have abused or exploited the elderly population in the Virgin Islands for the past four years. However, I like to think of it differently - I had the privilege of serving this community and fighting for those elder individuals in obtaining justice in these cases. Every elder individual who has been victimized deserves a team of professionals fighting for them ... and that is what this bill provides.

The Elder Anti-Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team is critical to ensure that the proper individuals and agencies work together to ensure the safety for the elderly population – particularly those suspected to be victims of physical or emotional abuse or financial exploitation. The Virgin Islands is blessed with many agencies who work to protect our elder citizens from such horrendous actions and ensuring that they work together is vital. This MDT [multi-disciplinary team] will provide an avenue for the countless agencies to

come together and share information and to jointly seek justice for members of the elder population who have been victimized. We should leave no stone unturned when it comes to protecting the heart of our community.

Furthermore, having an Elder Abuse Registry, such as the Sex Offender Registry, for those who are convicted of exploiting or abusing an elderly person would serve an incredibly useful function. Those who are found guilty or who have pled guilty to crimes involving the mistreatment of elderly individuals deserve to be singled out. They should not be employed by financial or governmental institutions that allow them unbridled access to this vulnerable part of our population and the information about their finances.

Far too often, it is the access – often provided by their position or employment – that leads to temptation and ultimately to the crimes that bring these individuals into the court process. They get access to the bank or credit information of someone who may not be able to keep up with their finances – at least not on a daily basis – and they use that information to make withdrawals, transfers, or worse. I have seen bank accounts depleted of decades worth of retirement savings. I have prosecuted people who fraudulently obtained Power of Attorney to oversee the daily activities of elder adults suffering from dementia or other disabilities – then use that POA to divert mail/bank statements, gain direct access to accounts, and then drain the victims of their money or property. I have worked with the families of victims, who may now be deceased, to try and recoup losses from financial grabs of their relatives' money and/or property. These people who prey on our elder population are the people that we need to monitor, particularly when it comes to their access to elders, and to preclude from certain occupations that would enable them to commit further crimes.

The Department of Justice welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Elder Anti-Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team and to oversee the Elder Abuse Registry. DOJ also applauds the Senate for taking up matters such as this to protect the most vulnerable populations within our Territory.

That concludes my remarks. Thank you for your time and attention today.