

Finance Committee Budget Hearing | July 26, 2021

Legislature USVI

July 26, 2021 · 2.0 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/MOQ0PJSh0NY
Status	This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.
Transcribed by	VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.
Reliability	Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.
Public record	The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" · which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above.
Rights	To what we added · the transcription, its arrangement and its description · we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.

00:00:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 10 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]

0:05:00 Thank you. Oh, yeah, oh, yeah Oh, oh, yeah Thank you. Thank you.

0:06:39 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. guitar solo We'll be right back. We'll be right back. The Committee of Finance is hereby call to order. Madam Clerk, roll call, please.

0:33:30 Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Senator Blyden, present. Senator Samuel Carrion. Senator Carillon, present. Senator Dwayne M. DeGraff. Senator DeGraff, absent. Senator Donna A. Fred Gregory. Senator Fred Gregory, present. Senator Javon E. James Sr. Senator James Sr., absent.

0:34:04 absent. Senator Janelle K. Saro? Senator Saro? Present. Senator Kurt A. Viale? Here. Senator Viale? Present. Mr. Chair, you have five present, two absent. Any correspondence? No, Mr. Chair. You might go ahead and read the agenda into the record.

0:34:33 The Committee on Finance Fiscal Year 2022 budget hearing for Monday, July 26, 2021 at 9 a.m. in the Fritz E. Lewetz Legislative Chambers, Christianstead St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The Committee on Finance will receive testimony on the proposed fiscal year 2022 executive budget for the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States. At 9

a.m., the Department of Human Services, invited testifiers, Kimberly Kazi-Gomez, Commissioner. At 1.30 p.m., Bill No. 34, Office of the Governor, Jennifer O'Neill, Director, Office of Management and Budget, Adrian Williams-Octelian, Director, Office of Disaster Recovery. Mr. Chair, this concludes the reading of today's agenda.

0:35:30 Thank you Madam Clerk. Good morning to the people of the Virgin Islands. Good morning colleagues. Good morning to the testifiers. Today before us we have the Department of Human Services. I'm going to allow the Commissioner along with the individuals who are here in the world to put their name and title on the record. And then we'll allow those individuals who are participating virtually to put their name and title on the record. So beginning you Commissioner? And let me, before you, Senator Novel Francis, thank you for coming. And who do we have over there? Senator Carla Joseph, thank you for coming. Commissioner? Good morning, my name is Kimberly Cozzi-Gomez, I'm the Commissioner for the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services.

0:36:16 To your right. Good morning, my name is Carla Benjamin, I'm an Assistant Commissioner of the department of human services cfo and you can bring the mic down go ahead good morning charmaine modest antoine chief financial officer of the department of human services good morning mccall ryman brown assistant commissioner department of human services and next we'll go with those individuals who are participating virtually beginning with miss lewis Ms. Lewis good morning good morning Natalie Lewis Administrator Office of Intake and Emergency Services Penny Feather Ernie Penny Feather Administrator for the Division of Senior Citizen Affairs. Mr. Rojas. Good morning Deputy Commissioner Rhoda Rojas, Human Resources, Labor Relations and Payroll. Mrs. Smith. Good morning everyone. Gary Smith, Medicaid Director.

0:37:30 Good morning, Laura Dannen, Director of Operations for the Medicaid Program. Ms. Tucker-Lanz. Good morning, everyone. I'm Tishma Tucker-Lanz, Administrator for the Office of Child Care and Regulatory Services. Good morning, Ana Veles-Martinez, Director of Presidential Services, Herbert Gregg, Home for the Age. Good morning, Masika Lewis, Administrator for the Office of Head Start.

0:38:12 Good morning, Akilah O'Brien, Disaster Recovery Specialist. Ms. Hart, Ms. Hart, let's go to Ms. Heribut, Ms. Heribut, Ms. James good morning with James acting administrator for the office of residential and interstate compact affairs response on Tom good morning Edwin Monsanto assistant director of capital planning and development is Ms. Bali-Pol.

0:39:21 Good morning, Justina Bali-Pol, Distance Manager. Mr. Tain. Good morning, Kendall Tain, Director of Non-Profit and Support Services. Good morning, Kimberly Berry, Chief Legal Counsel. Mills Williams, Miss? Mr. Mills-Williams, Mr. Richards, Good morning, Michael Richards, Office of Head Start St. district and the assistant administrator similarly good morning my apologies I was muted I didn't realize before but Sherry's heart administrator for the Division of Children and Family Services.

0:40:37 Thank you, Ms. Herbert. Okay, anyone I haven't called? You can go ahead and put your name on the record. Yes. Natalie Bailey, Administrator, Division of Family Assistance. Thank you. Good morning, Yvette Henry. Good morning, Yvette Henry, Community Affairs Coordinator, ESF Sixth Lead. Good morning, Michelle Francis, director of strategic planning and operations. Good morning.

0:41:13 Good morning, director of operations. Okay, one deputy commissioner of operations. Okay, you repeat yourself, sir. And then we go back to the young lady, repeat yourself. Go ahead and repeat yourself. Good morning. Miguel Tricocci, Deputy Commissioner of Operations. And the young lady that was just before him. Good morning, Shari, Administrator for Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services.

0:41:51 Next, anyone else? Good morning. This is Virginia Raymond from Kwekwee's Home for the Age, Director of Residential Services, St. Thomas. Good morning, this is Shawna Brathwaite, Administrator for the Division of Intervention and Prevention Services. Anyone else? That's it. Okay.

0:42:22 Commissioner, you may proceed. I brought my whole team today just in case you had a question. Good morning, Honorable Senator Kurt Avila, and members of the Committee on Finance of the 34th Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands, other senators present, and those in the listening and viewing and virtual audiences. I'm Kimberly Cozzi-Gomez, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services. On any given day, you will find DHS spread across the territory, in court, in homes, in grocery stores, in hospitals, in offices, on airplanes, out on the road, and working in person via teams, email, phone, and every other modality in order to represent, serve, and assist clients. DHS plays a critical role in sustaining individuals, families, institutions, and the local economy through rendering our services daily and also through pursuing and successfully securing additional federal funds and enhanced federal matches. Throughout the pandemic, the community's need for DHS's services grew even more. We were called upon to serve more people than ever in the midst of the pre-existing budget shortfalls and staffing shortages. We answered, our people have served day in and day out on the front lines to ensure daily access to critical resources. From daily meal distribution services for our

youngest and our Head Start programs, to in-home care, COVID-19 and vaccine education, and meal delivery to our disabled and senior citizen clients. DHS secured and show up with resources, the resources that constitute a good life. As you will hear and see, we at the Department of Human Services staff rolled up our sleeves, many putting our own health at risk to ensure that through one of the toughest global seasons our generations have endured, our people would feel hopeful and supported.

- 0:44:22 We do have opportunities for improvement that we identify continually, but my team is committed to growth, change, and to process improvement along the way. I'm proud to serve alongside a dedicated team of individuals who lead with compassion, wisdom, and strength. I'm accompanied in the chambers today by members of the DHS leadership team. Ms. Charmaine Modeste Antoine, Chief Financial Officer. Ms. McHale Reimer-Brown, Assistant Commissioner for St. Thomas. And Ms. Carla Benjamin, Assistant Commissioner for St. Croix. Other members of my DHS senior leadership team who are available virtually are. Ms. Rhoda Rojas, Deputy Commissioner of HR, Labor Relations and Payroll. Attorney Kimberly Berry, Legal Counsel, Mr. Miguel Tricocchi, Deputy Commissioner of Operations, and Ms. Michelle Francis, Director of Strategic Planning. In addition, our DHS team of administrators and directors who were just introduced of our major divisions and offices are also available virtually.
- 0:45:28 Despite the many challenges presented in our fiscal year 2021, we at the Department of Human Services are pleased to share with this body the bigger picture of the wins and accomplishments that motivate us to continually strive to help our clients achieve their own good vision of a good life. Let's take a look at some of the highlights of 2021 on a video that we prepared. Services in crop three daily.
- 0:46:11 All those. Diverted. Diverted. Diverted that. D.A. D.A. D.A. The committee of finances will take a two minute recess. Transcription by CastingWords We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 0:51:35 We'll be right back. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 12 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:57:35 Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, oh, oh. The Committee of Finance is back on the record.
- 1:00:33 Commissioner, I will play the video presentation after your testimony, so you may proceed. Commissioner's mic. Go ahead. Test. Today, we humbly appear before this distinguished body to present support and justification for the \$75,085,610 general fund request for fiscal year 2022 to fund the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services.
- 1:01:06 The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services receives its authority pursuant to Title 34 of the Virgin Islands Code, the designated state agency for all publicly financed social services programs. We serve over a third of the territory's population through our 15 divisions and offices on all three islands. The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services has a multifaceted fiscal year 2022 budget of \$369,300,476.25. This includes federal multi-year grants with a grant period ending as far out as 2025.
- 1:01:48 DHS is expected to receive federal funds in the amount of \$291,606,866.25. This reflects a general fund budget of \$75,085,610, an increase of 31.9% from 2021. The breakdown is highlighted below. Included in the \$75 million is \$1,270,000 for the following programs. The Energy Crisis Program at \$1.1 million. Homemakers Program at \$125,000. The Centennial Project is \$25,000.
- 1:02:35 And the St. Query Mission Outreach is \$20,000. Additionally, we received non-appropriated special funds in the amount of \$2,538,000, which includes the following breakdown, \$1,750,000 for pharmaceutical assistance program, \$500,000 for senior citizen center funds, and \$288,000 for homes of the age revolving funds, which is derived from the fees paid by the residents. Historically, DHS has also been allocated a million dollars from the Crisis Intervention Fund by way of the 33rd Virgin Islands Code, Section 3091, which was created and established as a special revolving fund to be distributed to nonprofit agencies and youth services.
- 1:03:24 This is not included in the fiscal year 2022 budget, however, I would advocate for this to be as the nonprofit agencies supplement existing all GVI departments. The DHS GVI budget is on track to be completely spent by the end of this fiscal year. Pending a few things, approval of a technical appropriation transfer for the nurses and justification letters to pay invoices from unexecuted contracts. With the increased budget of \$75 million to our general fund, the Department of Human Services will be able to tackle two very pressing issues, contracts and vacancies. DHS is chronically underfunded for a few years. Last fiscal year, we understandably had to tighten our collective belts across GBI to accommodate the fiscal realities of the pandemic. Being underfunded, however, puts millions of dollars, federal dollars that require a local match at risk. Even with the increased budget and a potential ability to bring much-needed positions back online, there is still a shortfall for critically needed hires. These positions would allow our programs to operate without a human resource capital deficit. Filling this gap will increase morale, reduce staff burnout, and provide an increase in productivity across

all of our divisions. However, this budget is a move in the right direction, and we will be able to enable us to make great strides in executing contracts and filling our vacancies.

- 1:04:54 Our department began fiscal year 2021 with 685 positions across all our divisions and offices. During the fiscal year 2021, the department, due to attrition, we lost 56 positions due to resignations, dismissals, retirements, and deaths. During the same period, DHS onboarded 44 new hires and promoted or transferred 25 individuals internally with the approved personnel on federal budgets. We currently have 10 posted vacancies, two on the general fund, three on the federal, and five have a federal and general fund match on the Division of Personnel website. The changes in staffing, we were able to provide some relief to existing divisions and will provide a boost in productivity and while reducing staff burnout. So DHS is currently staffed at a total of 697 full-time part-time, and our Senior Community Senior Employment Program, our CSEP employees. We have 387 in the District of St. Croix and 310 in the District of St. Thomas St. John. DHS is currently working on addressing long-standing active pay and monies owed to employees, which predates this administration and my leadership team. This goes back to almost 2016. At this time approximately 400,000 has been identified to pay 42 current and past employees during this fiscal year. It is really important for us as a leadership to make sure that these DHS employees are made whole and we pay them what they owe. We owe them. The DH vision is to empower individuals to a place of self-sufficiency through our seamless delivery system of services.
- 1:06:43 We want those who come through our doors to one day be able to say life is good. I will now share with you a snapshot from all of our divisions to provide a clear understanding of what our budget enables us to do and to demonstrate where the needs still remain. Attached to the testimony are details on each division for your perusal. We've accomplished quite a lot this year when we see in the video you'll be able to see a little more but of course with an increase in this year's budget we'll be able to continue to do more for our constituents. DHS is a large agency and therefore we have placed additional detailed information in the appendices.
- 1:07:22 The Office of Head Start administers the Head Start program in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Head Start promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families. Head Start serves children who are 3 years old by December 31st and up to 5 years old at enrollment. In addition to education services, Head Start provides children and their families with health, nutrition, and disability services. Additionally, the Head Start was successfully applied for multiple Office of Head Start Disaster Recovery Grants, 11 which are for major construction projects to provide state-of-the-art Head Start environments for the children of the United States Virgin Islands.
- 1:08:02 To date, the Territory has received grant awards for two of the 11 major construction applications, totaling \$3,764,132. These grants are in addition to a grant award of \$3.5 million to construct and renovate Headstart Playgrounds and \$1.7 million for other program improvement projects. The disaster recovery funds have no local match requirement. We anticipate receiving final decisions on the remaining disaster recovery grant applications by the end of this local fiscal year.
- 1:08:39 The Office of Child Care and Regulatory Services provides support to low-income working families by allowing them access to affordable, high-quality early childhood and after-school programs. The OCCRS administers the Child Care and Development Fund. There are three components in OCCRS, subsidy, resources and referral, licensing, and quality. Since the start of the pandemic environment, the OCCRS has onboarded 63 new family, friends and neighbors' child care providers.
- 1:09:11 The department has had some challenges with timely payment of child care providers, but processes have been modified and supports implemented to allow for a seamless and timely payment system as we go into the new fiscal year. During the fiscal year 2021, the Office of Intake and Emergency Services continue to serve as the territory's primary point of contact for the Child Protective Services System receiving, assessing, and investigating cases of suspected child maltreatment. The intake office opened 226 investigations of suspected child abuse and neglect. In addition, the unit opened 71 cases involving minors presenting behavioral problems who are at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system. As the name of the unit denotes, the Office of Intake and Emergency Services also provided family preservation services to families, emergency welfare services to individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 years old, and burial services for indigenous individuals of any age. In continuing efforts to raise awareness about the comprehensive nature of the child protective services system in the Virgin Islands, Intake conducted child abuse and neglect response workshops for the Virgin Islands Police Department in March 2021 and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority in May 2021. Staff at the Intake Office resolve crisis and provide advocacy and referral services internally and externally. The Office of Intake and Emergency Services refers and transfers cases to all other divisions of the department, including foster care and adoptions, juvenile and prevention services, and the Adult Protective Services Unit. The The Division of Children and Family Services provides services to children and families where children are either maltreated or at an elevated risk for maltreatment. The majority of this division's clients are transferred from the Office of Intake and

- 1:11:11 Emergency Services. Children and families are provided services through the DCFS's protective unit for in-home services to prevent identified escalating to child maltreatment. that need the protection of DHS due to imminent danger of serious harm or death are provided services through our foster care and adoptive unit for out-of-home services. The department's increased fiscal year 2022 budget will allow for the hiring of staff to train, license, and monitor foster homes, to procure psychological and behavioral services, to pay foster care services provided by families, as well as facilities such as Nana Baby's Children's Home in the St. Thomas District. The Division of Children and Family Services is operating with significant and unsustainable staff deficits. The Division of Intervention and Prevention Services is formally known as the Division of Juvenile Justice. This division primarily serves youth whose primary presenting problem is behavioral.
- 1:12:14 Youth become clients of this division after being assessed by other divisions within DHS as being high risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system, or they become clients after becoming adjudicated, which is the actual involvement in the juvenile justice system. The division is comprised of the district offices, the Youth Rehabilitation Center on St. Croix, and the Anders Hope Group Home. The division districts serve at-risk youth, including persons in need of supervision or PENS. PENS are youth that have been assessed by the Family Division of the Superior Court and and have been determined to be beyond their parents' control, requiring the family court's supervision.
- 1:12:55 The family court also remands youth to the YRC or Youth Rehabilitation Center. Anishope Group Homes serves clients needing emergency placement, court order evaluations, and respite. The facility operates 24 hours a day. Staff provides supervision and guidance to the residents. A system of reward and consequences is used to encourage positive behavior. Therapeutic services are provided by therapists contracted by the Department of Human Services. The proposed fiscal year 2022 budget provides an opportunity for the Anishope Group Home to onboard much-needed staff to provide proper coverage for the 24-hour facility as well as reduce the current overtime hours being accrued due to the insufficient staffing levels.
- 1:13:43 The Office of Residential Interstate Compact Affairs, formerly known as the Office of Residential Services, coordinates admissions of DHS clients to residential facilities within the territory and for those that need services that are not available locally. O-R-I-C-A coordinates out-of-the-territory placements. The clients are children and adults admitted to residential facilities for services treatment of autism, spectrum disorders, mental dysfunction, behavioral issues, sexual deviance, physical and developmental disabilities.
- 1:14:19 The office also monitors service provision to the 91 clients that are in 14 residential facilities in the Virgin Islands as well as outside the territory. It's important to note that the division often provides lifetime services to clients depending on the nature of the client's diagnosis and need for treatment. Long-term services need to be considered carefully in the cost realistically. Clients with outstanding needs and medical fragility have very few options for discharge from the contracted facilities. For this reason, we have clients in residential facilities that range from newborn to age 68 years old. Most recently, I personally visited each of the facilities we have in Texas and Florida and was able to spend quality time with our clients. It's evident that a long-term care plan is needed for the U.S. territory, or we will always need off-island residential care. Part of the discussions with the facilities was their potential willingness to provide those services locally so we can bring some of our residents home. The Office of Residential and Interstate Compact Affairs also houses the territories Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, or ICPC, as well as the Interstate Compact for Juveniles, ICJ. The Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services Division is a core component of the workforce locally. The division partners with private employers, government agencies, and community stakeholders to facilitate employment and training of persons with disabilities. DRS is a small DHS division with a large statutory responsibility which is currently under the third party fiduciary. The program is responsible for the oversight of seven federally funded programs that help to educate and shape the lives of individuals with disabilities. The St. Cory Disabilities Division, which has operated out of the building on the campus of the DHS YRC since Hurricane Maria 2017, will finally be moving.
- 1:16:19 A number of additional accommodations are included in the appendices for reference. Thus far in 2021, approximately 32 college students receive tuition assistance, which includes travel, room, and board, as well as books. Between the districts, DRS achieved 26 successful closures, which indicates that those participants secured competitive employment. The goal in this area has been adversely affected by the pandemic, considering the amount of business closures and furloughs. However, due to our collaboration with our core partner, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, the program was able to shift some of our participants that are ready for employment into employment opportunities. Over 60 eligible students with disabilities have engaged in pre-employment transition services as stipulated by the U.S. Department of Education.
- 1:17:11 The Division of Family Assistance, even amidst the realities of the lowest number of staffing in over a decade, disbursed \$52,940,909 in benefits to qualified persons from October 1st to May 31st, 2021. The Division of Family Assistance is responsible for management and disbursement of the department's critically important food, cash, and energy assistance

to vulnerable individuals and families in the Virgin Islands. Since the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency was declared in March of 2020, the DFA has worked tirelessly with the Virgin Islands Department of Education and all public and private schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program and the U.S. Department education food and nutrition services to ensure that the Virgin Islands was able to benefit from the federal pandemic electronics transfer which is more popular known as the PEBT it's also important to note that all of the Department of Human Services is really not viewed as a revenue generating entity for the US Virgin Islands just for the food cash and energy benefits dispersed by our division of family assistance over 70 million dollars is added to our VI economy this fiscal year. Having access to reliable and affordable quality health care is really important now more than ever in the United States. It's territories and the rest of the world as we continue to face, fight, and strive to overcome this COVID-19 pandemic. The Virgin Islands Medicaid program is one of the most important publicly funded health insurance programs for low-income persons in the territory. Medicaid provides access to quality health care for approximately 33 500 medicaid members and fiscal year 2021 dhs was awarded 129 million in federal enhanced funding from the centers for medicare and medicaid services or cms these benefits aid in overall improvement in population health

1:19:15 and in reducing our hospitals bad debt and uncompensated care when dhs assumed the role of the Virgin Islands Single State Agency for Medicaid in 2012, there were approximately 8,000 to 9,000 Medicaid members with an annual Medicaid federal budget of about \$18 million. As mentioned, nine years later, we're now serving over 33,000 members annually. This growth has brought significant federal assistance to the local economy. However, it's important to note that Medicaid is a shared federal and state program, and And the Virgin Islands government must, therefore, contribute required local match funding according to the established federal medical assistance percentage, also known as FMAP. This massive program comes with immense responsibilities. For true quality assurance and to not place this program at risk, it's imperative to appropriately staff and fund the VI Medicaid program. Members of the Medicaid program have access to quality medical care, discounted prescription medications and low-cost medical supplies, as well as a full range of medical support services.

1:20:26 Since the COVID pandemic public health emergency, DHS eliminated the requirement for Medicaid members to get referrals for specialists and to get prior authorization for most medical services provided by eligible Medicaid providers. As of June 30th, the VI Medicaid program has paid out over \$19,285,341 to the following Roy Leshner-Schneider Hospital, Juan F. Louis Hospital, Frederick St. Health Center, and the St. Thomas Easton Medical Center. Medicaid continues to make major strides to secure funding for and implement important information technology initiatives, but not limited to, and I listed all of them in the testimony. With the valuable assistance from the legislative body, which appropriated \$407,000 for 32 positions in the fiscal year 2021 miscellaneous budget, DHS moved forward in creating the Medicaid program integrity unit, which will bring us in full compliance with the requirements of the 2019 public law 11694 program integrity lead and will actually exceed the requirements as we were able to add the new positions of Medicaid fraud investigators, quality control reviewers, administrative staff, program integrity and analysts, and the director of program integrity. Additionally, the special fiscal year 2020 appropriation has enabled DHS to finally transferred nine temporary Medicaid employees who've been providing eligibility provider enrollment claims and administration functions to permanent employees of the government of the Virgin Islands. As of April 2021, Department of Property Procurement gave DHS approval to execute Medicaid provider agreements at the commissioners level. We're excited to say that we've executed

1:22:28 more than 60 Medicaid provider agreements since February 1st. The Division of Senior Citizen Affairs has the mandate and pleasure of improving the quality of life for seniors of the Virgin Islands. This helps in preserving their personal dignity and ability to function independently for as long as they possible or until their care plan requires a transition to assisted living or residence. Yes, the good life is not only a goal for our able-bodied residents under the age of 60, but for also those over the age of 60. SCA, through our dedicated staff, has continued to provide critical in-person services to our seniors age 60 and older, and adults with disabilities ages 18 to 59. We raise community awareness to prevent, and when necessary, report abuse, neglect, financial exploitation of our vulnerable adult and elderly.

1:23:23 We also maintained two homes for the age during the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency. Since the early days of COVID, the Federal Administration for Community Living collaborated with states and territories, state units on aging, to include the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services. This was to meet the nutrition, socialization, and wellness needs of our seniors. DHS targeted as three primary areas of our service delivery. Although our senior centers have been closed since March, our DHS staff has prioritized keeping our seniors who attended those centers socially connected. Birthdays and anniversaries were still celebrated, although not in the traditional ways.

1:24:09 Our staff ensured they continued to keep in contact with our seniors, completing weekly wellness checks via phone calls. Additionally, our Senior Center staff joined the Senior Community Nutrition Aids to deliver the meals to the homes of

seniors who requested them. DHS applies to churches, the community civic groups, and all the caring individuals who have donated board games, puzzles, arts and crafts, and other items to keep our seniors engaged while they're at home. Additional details regarding what the Senior Citizen Affairs is able to achieve for our seniors through our wellness programs can also be found in the appendices. Our Older Americans Month, the AKA Senior Citizens Month activities were greatly scaled back this year but they were safely planned and implemented. We had church services to the cultural days and the collaboration with AARP to have cultural icons, Stanley and the ten sleepless nights, serenade our senior citizens on all three islands with specific focus on our senior housing communities like Wim Gardens, Lucinda Millen Home, Lucia and Social Services, Ebenezer Gardens, the Herbert Gwig and Queen Louise Home for the Age, and the Salicino White Housing Community on St. Thomas. It's a wonderful time, was had by all.

1:25:28 DHS suspended our volunteer and work activities from March 2020 until about April or May 2020 for this year for our Senior Volunteer and Foster Grandparents programs and the CSEP. during their time away from their volunteer and work activities however our seniors were continuing to be paid their wages and their volunteer stipends although we mourn the loss continue to mourn the loss of our four beloved senior residents of the queen louise home who passed because of the contracting of covet 19 in 2020 we're pleased to report that all 24 senior residents at Herbert Grigg home were vaccinated and no senior was contracted the COVID-19 virus at Herbert Grigg. 10 of the 11 seniors that are currently at Queen Louise home for the age have also received the COVID-19 vaccines. We've also implemented strict COVID-19 safety protocols for both homes for the age. There is still no still no in-person visitation but the use of Skype and tablets and telephone calls with the residents' loved ones continues. When it is safe to resume in-person visitation at the homes, all preventative measures will be enacted to include PPEs for visitors and residents.

1:26:45 And we continue to encourage family members to be vaccinated as well. Our homemakers continue to go into the homes of our elderly, frail seniors and adults with disabilities to help them with activities of daily living, baths, assistance with eating, ability, personal grooming, and dressing. The diligent Adult Protective Services social workers and other unit staff continue to investigate all reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation on our seniors and adults with disabilities. The Family Caregiver Support Program has maintained their caregiver support groups for caregivers and have dispersed PPEs, disposable undergarments, cleaning supplies, and other needed items to our caregivers. It has been an extremely challenging year for our Division of Senior Citizen Affairs, but we remain committed to assisting our senior responsibilities include drafting, reviewing, and facilitating the execution of DHS contracts, overseeing the criminal victim's compensation, crucial role in drafting legislation that impacts the department and its constituents, managing the hearings and appeals process for all benefits offered by the department, assisting in the oversight of the Medicaid Fraud Union, providing a 29er in the contract execution process, and many will need additional 29er in the contract execution process, and many will need additional funding to execute.

1:28:09 We're pleased to see this in our 2022 budget. The criminal victims' compensation program has been limited by a lack of funds, causing claims to back up for over years. A special thanks to this body who approved \$100,000 be converted this year. DHS paid \$94,929.48 in claims for fiscal year 2021. All of the reviewed claims the criminal victim's compensation has approved is actually \$360,961.43 in payments that remain outstanding. In fiscal year 2021, we reviewed 79 applications.

1:28:53 There are currently 405 open cases. The Office of Fiscal Affairs remained especially busy this year as responsibilities to operate in an efficient system of accounting and budgeting controls for all divisions and activity centers of the second largest government department only increased during the pandemic environment. The Department of Human Services has over 75 open and active grants which require specialized fiscal oversight. The case to develop a grant sheet is no longer a request but a critical plea to meet the reporting and oversight compliance requirements. The Office of Fiscal Affairs team has continued to deteriorate to date. A few years ago, the Office of Fiscal Affairs had nine accountants, two directors of financial services and one fiscal management officer. Currently due to departures, there are only four accountants and two of those accountants are program specific.

1:29:51 This highlights the critical needs of staffing in the office to ensure proficiency. Once appropriately staffed, we can promote continuous improvements by focusing on implementing efficient processes and internal controls. When the focus is on the function, unmanaged gaps disrupt the continuity of critical cross-functional work processes, creating redundant work, overlooked work, and rework. If a great employee is placed in a system riddled with issues, the lack in systematic fluency, processes, and structure, and or practices of the organization will affect the performance results. As we stated earlier, DHS is among the top three heavily federally funded departments in the government of the Virgin Islands, and we're currently tracking \$291,676,866.25.

1:30:47 Federal regulatory guidelines mandate how each federal funds are to be spent. These guidelines are both general and grant-specific. Grant-specific guidelines are found in the notice of awards under terms and conditions, knowing that there

are certain prohibitions and other compliance requirements. It's crucial we administer our federal funds with transparency, efficiency, and compliance. The Division of Operations is responsible for the oversight of maintenance, transportation, capital, development, and planning, as well as our disaster recovery projects.

- 1:31:21 DHS recently hired a Deputy Commissioner of Operations to lead the division and provide the much-needed leadership, expertise, and support for our critical capital projects. The division is and has been short staffed in the areas of maintenance, transportation and capital development. The current staff has proven to be an invaluable asset to our DHS recovery program and is achieving many gains through the BBA implementation or the bipartisan budget act. Maintenance facility staffing and an OSHA specialist are just some of the positions that are open as we need more staff to ensure the smooth transition of our major projects.
- 1:31:59 During capital projects and disaster recovery, some of the DHS major projects are underway. At Queen Louise Home for the Age is a candidate for the prudent replacement under the BBA considerations. It's now estimated at over \$18 million, up from an insufficient of \$16,000, which was the first estimate by FEMA. This is an excellent chance for DHS to greatly improve the care for the elderly in the Virgin Islands. The department is capitalizing on the opportunity by looking at other, more convenient locations for the Queen Louise Home for the Aged replacement facility, and the property has been assessed and we're negotiating through our partner agency, Department of Property and Procurement. The new Hanson complex, FEMA estimates for repairs due to Hurricane Irma and Maria could exceed \$12 million. Included in repairs would be a complete roof replacement with far more resilient multilayered membrane system, impact-resistant windows throughout, and upgrades to HVAC and electrical systems to the current building ventilation and energy codes and standards. This will greatly improve the working conditions and productivity for DHS staff in St. Thomas and the Newt Hanson offices.
- 1:33:15 Herbert Grickholm for the age was awarded a contract for the completion of the dining room roof repairs and is slated to begin, actually it started already, and the final completion will be by November 2021. DHS works continuously with FEMA to complete the obligation of the Herbert Grig Home facility permanent repairs which is estimated for about four million dollars. This does not include the new state-of-the-art facility which will cost about 61 million dollars. Richmond Senior Center temporary repairs to the facility have been a major focus during the pandemic, and continues to work towards permanent repairs. Our Head Start facilities will be heightened focus over the next 18 months to two years as DHS leadership diligently worked with the Department of Health and Human Services, HHS, and was recently granted the two major awards for our Concordia Head Start facility and our Annas Hope facility.
- 1:34:11 DHS was awarded over \$1.7 million for our Concordia and \$1.9 million in our Annas Hope facility. We continuously wait for our other nine Head Start projects and facilities on St. Corey and St. Thomas. Just reiterating the fact that all of this money for Head Start is actually federally funds with no local match. The Youth Rehabilitation Center was recently awarded a \$1.1 million to the wind retrofit project. DHS is currently in phase one of this project, which has been awarded \$134,000. agency is currently working with the DLR team in the design phase of the project. In addition, DHS is currently also working to complete the permanent repairs to the facility in which funding will be from the GVI insurance funds. Estimated completion of all repairs is slated for December 2022. The St. John Multipurpose Center initially was estimated by FEMA at \$90,000 for the damage sustained by hurricanes irma and maria a facilitated discussion was had with fema on march 31st in 2021 agreeing fema agreeing that this project would exceed the large project threshold and also agreed to re-scope and cost the entire project making the facility eligible for bba considerations fema is currently making these changes with the latest estimate of over 450 000 DHS is in the final process of supplying the information needed to move that project forward. The St. John Multicenter Modulars is in the stage where the Department of Public Works is preparing the proposal for solicitation. The solicitation should be completed by December 2021. Our facilities are a priority for DHS and for the clients we serve as well as our employees. While there are a multitude of repairs that are needed since the 2017 hurricanes, we've had a skeleton crew and they've done a great job ensuring that our facilities continue to operate and serve our community.
- 1:36:15 Some of our current smaller projects in action is the Queen Louise home kitchen floor repair, our elevator and generator at Newt Hanson, and our Richmond Senior Center bathroom. I've included a chart or outline of the major projects in the timeline. The Office of Commissioner includes also the Office of Strategic Planning and Operations. It's made significant strides in helping the department move collective needle in identifying and accomplishing strategic goals and objectives, and also significant visibility and awareness of the department and divisions.
- 1:36:51 This past January, a new public information officer was added to the team, and she made the video, which you'll see, and was critical in taking the refresh brand to the next level with a new visual including a new logo. It's important to note that our expertise in communications and creativity were gaining momentum within our community. DHS participation in two government house press box garnered over 24,000 views combined, providing a more direct and engaging

opportunity to learn and inquire about key DHS programs and services like Medicaid and SNAP and the PEBT benefit, the Office of Child Care Regulatory Services subsidies and the grants and services and more. We've also achieved over a 200% increase in social media engagement and followers since February 2020 through our creation and posting of useful and informative content on our Facebook media pages. Trends and insights for the VIDHS Facebook page continues to show a steady increase. The page currently has 2,338 followers which is up from 950 in early 2020. Our most popular post has been chaired 43 times, with an audience reach of 6,448. The Management Information System Office aims to provide day-to-day support to our almost 700 employees across the three islands and 13 sites, with a staff of less than 10. This is another office that's been consistently understaffed for all the stuff that they've been tasked to do. MIS oversees our contracts with both SmartNet and VIA for Internet service.

1:38:29 Internet to 13 DHS sites is provided via the Internet service provider, SmartNet, and are all connected via one network base on the infrastructure designed by our ISP. SmartNet also provides a network infrastructure using a combination of fiber and wireless radios to connect the sites to one DH network, allowing us to share resources more effectively. Internet is provided to our smaller Head Start centers via Viya. We're making every effort to convert our legacy telephone system to our more modern voice over Internet protocol, a telephone system that uses Internet services as a transmission medium instead of phone lines. St. Croix is approximately 45% converted, and we're moving to convert all legacy systems.

1:39:18 As everyone's noted, we've had some issues with our telephone system. The district of St. Thomas and St. John should be converted within the next few months, and the migration of the VOIP service is more cost effective because the service works through the internet, which is already paid for and would not increase the base on usage. It's easier to maintain, its technology is constantly advancing, and we'll probably have an annual savings of about \$90,000 when the upgrade is complete. We also are responsible for the Emergency Support Function 6 or ESF 6, which is Mass Care Emergency Assisting Housing and Human Services.

1:40:00 This is a massive mandate that requires significant fiscal and workforce support in terms of budget, staff, volunteers and with our ESF6 partners. Delivering of sheltering operations is triggered when the governor issues an emergency declaration. We've done all our shelter inspections and have been completed and our primary evacuation shelters have been identified for all four islands. However, we noted in the past committee hearings and our public messaging that shelter in place is really crucial for the health and well-being, especially as our numbers of COVID rise. We also have a non-profits and support services office which provides programmatic and fiscal oversight for the DHS assigned private sector, non-profit agencies, appropriated funds in the miscellaneous section of the GBI budget. DHS is the link between public and private agencies and is vital to ensuring the provision of services needed in this community. As you know, our VI subgrantees provide an array of necessary and urgent services to the vulnerable populations of the U.S. territory. When I say it takes a village, the nonprofit community is crucial to ensuring the gaps are filled. Our sub-grantees have expressed positive feedback about the improved responsiveness of the DHS department regarding the release of the 2021 payments. The division also has established clear procedures and improved communications between human services, OMB, and property procurement regarding the process for payment release and the notification grant award completion. Some of our goals for 2022 and beyond is for everyone needing or utilizing human services and programs to say that DHS has helped them achieve their vision of a good life. To that end, our focus for 2022 will be improve the process of timely payment to all vendors and execute all outstanding contracts and leases, a professional development plan and training for all of our employees, streamline our fiscal processes, development, and implement and manage a department-wide audit tracking and analytics system, revise all our policy

1:42:06 and procedures by division according to the federal and local mandates, recruit and hire for critical vacancies, retain an energized and engaged work source to enhance service delivery, work with all of our federal agencies to ensure timely submission of reports, fully implement the e-Civis within DHS, identify additional and innovative ways to continue to communicate our services and programs effectively, develop an interactive and user-friendly website, upgrade the telephone and internet systems, prepare plan and ensure the safety of all of our residents during a disaster through our ESF-6 operations, implement major projects through all of our divisions and offices, ensure all phases of minor and major capital projects are tracked accurately, begin construction on our approved Head Start facilities, complete all financial applications for the two skilled nursing facilities and begin architectural and engineering designs, and of course, improve the Newt Hanson complex for the approved renovations by FEMA. So what really constitutes a good life?

1:43:15 We'd argue that a life marked by people and support services along your path that provided love and guidance, nurturing, access, assistance, and resources, and sometimes that necessary kick in the pants. A good life is less about money and things and more about knowing that from birth through the sunset years, there were resources available to help you through each phase of your life. The Department of Human Services is not only mandated with providing services suited for children, youth, and adults, and seniors, but we are the department that is also here in death for those who have no

resources for a proper burial. DHS is often relied upon as a state-appointed parent for kids and adults who have been abandoned. And in some of these serious situations, the government of the Virgin Islands through DHS steps in to provide 100% of the care across the individual's entire lifespan. A good life is many things, but in the end, it's realizing that there were hands that helped you and voices that encouraged you along the way. It's not being alone and knowing that there was care when you needed it. It's receiving the support and resources necessary to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency in your life and for your family. This leadership team and our current staff are committed to this vision, to fulfilling it and working with this body to access the funding and support needed for everyone to achieve and live out their vision of a good life. As we conclude today's testimony, I would like to emphasize that our projected fiscal year 2022 budget demonstrates tremendous improvements. Through the commitment of our leadership team, our incredible relationships with our federal partners and local government and nonprofit entities, we are extremely encouraged about our future of service to the most vulnerable living in our Virgin Islands community. Despite the challenges conveyed in our presentation, including staffing across DHS and the match

1:45:09 requirements for federal programs we're confident that with the continued support of the Brian Rich administration and all of you in this body we can empower everyone we serve towards self-sufficiency which is really what is a good life and closing I would like to thank Governor Brian my fellow colleagues in our administration the 34th legislature for your ongoing support for the people that we serve daily our praises are definitely reserved for all of the diligent employees of DHS none of our accomplishments could have been realized today without their commitment and hard work during the pandemic as commissioner it's my privilege and honor to lead the team of people that show up every day to fulfill our mandates and contribute our skills to our respective positions Mr. Chairman we thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this committee we're available to answer any questions you may have at this time thank you Commissioner, we will now go through to the video presentation.

1:46:20 Our 697 Virgin Islands Department of Human Services essential employees across three islands provided services in fiscal year 2021 to over 40,000 community residents to ensure daily access to critical resources. Although specific sites suspended or diverted services from in-person to virtual for safety reasons due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DHS remained operational for business every day. Our Senior Citizen Affairs Meals on Wheels program provided 152,782 meals for 1,016 clients during the pandemic. Our Head Start program provided continuous early childhood education services virtually via socially safe learning packets and supported by the Tex4K system to nearly 700 children and their families.

1:47:31 I think we lost us on. I know, it's like... They're saying they can't hear either, right?

1:48:38 They're still able to read as it goes along. Yeah. Okay, we're going to stop it for now and see if we can get it up, and if we can, we'll play the entire video a little bit later. Let's go ahead and stop with a video colleagues you're gonna go to eight minute wrong we're gonna begin with Senator Blighton thank you Mr. Chair good morning to my colleagues South Central staff the people of the Virgin Islands those listening and viewing and good morning Commissioner Kathy Gomez and your supporting management team and other members via teams and thank you so much for that comprehensive in-depth testimony you stated in your testimony basically that you have almost 700 employees 697 to be exact 15 divisions 80 plus programs and you're asking for 75 million eighty five thousand six hundred and ten dollars to run an operation which is a thirty one point nine percent increase from fiscal year 21 but I like as we saw you know in your testimony which I'm which I must say I'm

1:50:32 proud of I'm happy to see that you have 44 new hires promoted 25 within and you 10 vacancies let me actually uh in terms of um just the staff up the new hires that the 44 new hires does that include a 24 transfer or that's in addition to in addition to so 44 the new hires are new to DHS and then the others are internal promotions or internal movement well that's that's That's a huge improvement, I must say. And let me ask you while I'm on that topic. You spoke to the new position of medical fraud investigator, which is very important when it comes to our Medicaid program. How many investigators have you onboarded?

1:51:22 I have to double check that. Two, right? Sir, it would be two that we've hired so far. And what number you're looking at, can two, is two sufficient? No, I believe two would be sufficient for fraud investigation. I think we're going to be four. Speak in the mic, please. And state your name before you speak. Assistant Commissioner McHale-Rimer Brown. It's going to be an entire program integrity unit, not only with the fraud investigators, we will have quality control reviewers who will be reviewing our eligibility, a director of program integrity who will be a part of that unit. So it will be an entire unit who will be devoted to fraud assessment and investigation.

1:52:08 And is that part of the 10 vacancies that you have posted or in addition to? And if that's the case, there's a budget hearing, this is the place? Yes, we've already advertised. So right now I believe you have probably three of those 10 that are related to the program integrity. Okay, very well. Also on page 10 of the testimony, it was mentioned when it comes to

those intake and emergency services, you have 226 investigations. And you also, and that was in reference to child abuse and neglect. How much have been completed, that's the question I want to know.

1:52:48 How much have those investigations have been completed or are they all in the process and still open? There are various stages. And so once they come through Office of Intake and Emergency Services, they're investigated. If they need ongoing services, they're then transferred to one of our other divisions, whether it be in it could be protective care, foster care. It could also be our Division of Juvenile Justice or DIPs, really. Okay, thank you. Let's go to the post-op report. Sure.

1:53:15 Outstanding obligations on page 11 of 40. You have \$1.8 million. Are those vendors in the process of being paid? We have been. Please state your name before you speak. Charmaine Modest Antoine, CFO. We have been trying to identify internal funding to pay for the outstanding obligations, but the amount is quite high, and because we have other fixed costs that our budget takes up, it's very difficult. We have been trying to find the funding internally within our budget to pay these, but it will be utilised in funding that's available for other fixed costs.

1:54:03 Okay, because it's critical that we pay our vendors, you know, many of them are small businesses so it's very important that we try to see how we can accomplish that task. let's go to I really need to go to the federal grants let's go to on page 31 or 40 we have many an extensive list of federal grants which is fine I'm just gonna focus on those that have not been extended as far for instance can you explain to me well I guess because of school you have not started but still The Head Start amount received was \$8.9 million, but none have been expended to date.

1:54:46 Can you give a brief explanation as to why or what the purpose? The fiscal year for the Head Start program is July 1 to June 30th. This is the new grant that just came online. At the time that the information was compiled and sent to post audit, the expenditures for the fiscal year hadn't been posted. Okay, what about a head start disaster recovery from the hurricanes? It was February of 2020 and well, I guess it extended on January of 22 But where we are in that process of the 3.5 million dollars We're at various stages. We have advertised the RFP The 3.5 million if I'm not mistaken is for the playgrounds is for the playground facilities So we had to do an RFP for that, and that advertisement has been completed.

1:55:41 Two minutes. And the senior community service, the CSEP, expires June of next year also. The \$908,000 have not been extended. I know the commissioner mentioned our testimony. They were paid even though because of COVID-19 they were home. So will we be able to extend those funds before the deadline? Yes, majority of them. And it's a continuous grant, so we just actually got a new grant for that. Oh, great. Good to hear. Well, that's a very important program, and our seniors do appreciate and enjoy that program. Let me go to, well, we have until 23 to extend these other two, so I won't really stress on it, but the Child Care Development Block Grant for 23 million dollars.

1:56:24 It expires in a couple of years, basically, child care development. scope we're looking at and will we extend all 23 million because that's a critical part of any child's life. What does it entail in that? Allow Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin to answer. Good morning, Senator, Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin. That is actually a new grant. That's an American Rescue Plan grant that we just received. And so we're developing the plan for that. we're intending to do some an additional round of mini grants to child care providers this time to include some some some grants that are allowed to be used for construction and bringing our QRIS back online so probably with a consultant so when can we see those rolling out and I appreciate you have having sub grantees because there's a lot of child care providers and that's a critical stage of their life and I honestly do not want to see a penny go back to the federal government for this grant because they understood the importance of giving us that grant funding and we need to understand that we must find a creative way of utilising. So what do you have in mind in terms of rolling that out? It's going to be focused on quality improvement and putting hands directly into, putting money directly into the hands of the childcare providers.

1:57:50 Time. And lastly, Mr. Chair, when it comes to your leases, many of them I have seen that you have executed, but some of them are waiting for property and procurement for execution. You have a large, extensive list of grants, and then you have, I mean, not grants, professional professional service contracts, and you have others that, many of them that have a contract expired but a new contract is pending funding resolution due to the rate increase and those are federally funded. Can you explain that for me, please?

1:58:33 Sure. So the residential contract specifically, the majority of those are just general funding. So we didn't have a contract in place for our residential facilities for 2021. And during that process, we paid by justification letters. They provided a rate increase, which then left us in a deficit for 2021. So for 2022, we're going to be able to execute the contracts with the \$75 million. We'll be able to execute those contracts and include all those rate increases for the residential facilities specifically.

1:59:05 Okay. Very well. I'm very happy to hear that because of a little concern. So thanks for the clarification and Mr. Chair won't abuse my time, thank you so much for the time. Thank you Senator Blyden. Point of inquiry, Senator Fred Gregory.

Thank you Mr. Chair and good morning to the testifiers and good morning to my colleagues. The previous senator asked a question as it relates to outstanding allegations and I think I saw some 1.2 plus million dollars in outstanding obligations and the response was your current budget cannot accommodate your outstanding obligations what is your anticipated spend of your 57 point 57 million dollars for FY 2021 we do anticipate utilizing the full amount of that budget how many vacancies do you have in the vacancies area i am not a hundred percent sure i have a deputy commissioner about um hr rota rojas yes deputy commissioner of hr rota rojas um currently we have as as we say in the testimony 10 positions posted we also have um a number of positions totaling 68 that are in whether they're interviewing of vacancies i calculated i'm sorry and you come up to about 4.3 million dollars in vacant positions so you have quite a number of positions that are unfilled so i cannot see how you anticipate expending all of your funds in fy 2021 so you have more than enough money to begin to reshuffle and come and request an appropriation transfer if necessary to pay your outstanding debt

2:01:12 that has to happen so to come before the senate and say that you don't have funding to cover it It's not an accurate statement. We are how many months away from FY 2021 closure of his commissioner? Two. So CFO. I'm not sure that I agree with you on the statement of having \$4.3 million in vacancy savings. We don't have 4.3. How many positions do you have vacant?

2:01:44 We have a critical vacancies list that we've submitted a supplemental budget for. One more minute for this, Senator. HR, a direct question was asked in reference to vacant positions. Can you please answer? Yes, Deputy Commissioner Rhoda Rojas. As I was stating, in total vacancies, it is 10 currently posted and 68 that we have. Okay, you have six.

2:02:12 Hold on one minute. Just one other time. Sure, no problem. Not how much is posted, just how many vacant positions do you have? In total, 78. 78, okay, and only 10 were posted? What's the total of 78 vacancies? CFO, what is the total of your 78 vacancies?

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.

4x	Senator Marvin Blyden heard in this transcript as: Blyden, Marvin A. Blyden
3x	Commissioner Carla Benjamin
3x	Senator Dwayne DeGraff heard in this transcript as: DeGraff, Dwayne M. DeGraff
3x	Senator Fred Gregory the surname alone also matches: Donna A. Frett-Gregory; Donna Frett-Gregory
3x	Senator Janelle K. Saro heard in this transcript as: Saro
3x	Senator Kurt Viale heard in this transcript as: Kurt A. Viale, Viale
2x	Governor Albert Bryan Jr heard in this transcript as: Brian
2x	Senator Carla Joseph
2x	Senator Javan James heard in this transcript as: Javon E. James Sr
2x	Senator Kurt Avila
2x	Senator Marise C. James the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr heard in this transcript as: James Sr
2x	Senator Marvin A. Blighton heard in this transcript as: Blighton
2x	Senator Novelle Francis

heard in this transcript as: Novel Francis

2x

Senator Samuel Carillon

heard in this transcript as: Carillon

2x

Senator Samuel Carrion

1x

Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory

heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Fred Gregory

1x

Senator Donna Frett-Gregory

heard in this transcript as: Donna A. Frett-Gregory