February 25, 2021

Insular Superintendent Carlos McGregor
Department of Education
2133 Hospital Street
Christiansted, VI 00820

Re: Tour of Eight St. Croix District Schools in Preparation for Opening

Dear Insular Superintendent McGregor:

As reported to the 34th Legislature’s Committee on Education and Workforce Development hearing on February 12, 2021, the Department was unable to attend the scheduled tour of the eight public schools in the District of St. Croix on Friday, February 5, 2021. This was due to an unanticipated event the evening prior, a flare exceedance from the Limetree Bay facility, that required the attention of staff member previously assigned to do the tour.

We did however confer with our counterparts in Department of Education and the VI Fire Service for any anomalies that they may have observed during the tour that would require the Department of Planning and Natural Resources immediate attention. They indicated there were no issues of concern.

The Department is fully committed to supporting the Board of Education and the Department of Education in meeting the Virgin Islands Code, Title 17, Section 24(a)(2)(b) requirements to “develop and adopt the standards and guidelines for conducting a comprehensive annual inspection, assessment and evaluation of all public school facilities...” to prepare for the opening of the territory’s schools, ensuring they are environmentally safe. We welcome the opportunity to be a part of that effort.
If you have any questions or concerns regarding the matter, please contact Austin Callwood, Division of Environmental Protection Director at 340 774-3320 or email austin.callwood@dpnr.vi.gov.

Sincerely,

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol
Commissioner

Cc: Carla A. Bastian, Ed.D, Deputy Superintendent, VIDE
Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ed.D., Chief Operations Officer, VIDE
Austin F. Callwood, Director of Environmental Protection, DPNR
Joseph Sibilly, Facilities Supervisor, VIDE.
February 11, 2021

Hon. Senator Genevieve R. Whitaker
Chair, Committee on Education and Workforce Development
34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
#3022 Estate Golden Rock
St. Croix, VI 00820

RE: Committee Hearing Regarding Certification on the Re-opening of Schools

Dear Honorable Senator Whitaker:

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) acknowledge receipt of your request for testimony on certification of the reopening of schools per Title 17 Chapter 3, Section 24 subsections (a)(2)(A) and (B). We note that it is the Board of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Education that is required to develop and adopt guidelines for the reopening of schools, and that technical consultation is to be provided by agencies such as DPNR. Our historical records do not indicate any specific criteria for DPNR to provide guidance; however, we anticipate that our guidance will be based on air and water quality compliance.

Prior to your request for testimony on the subject, the Department did receive an invitation from the Department of Education (DoE) to participate in the inspection of Pre-K to Third grade schools in the St. Croix District on Friday, February 5, 2021. We were fully prepared to engage in this very important process that morning until the individual scheduled diverted to respond to the Limetree flare up. DPNR has since consulted with several of our counterparts in DoE and Fire Service to determine the extent of observation and inspection required. Their observations detailed minor deficiencies, which are mostly surface-related and easily corrected. We have also consulted with the DoE with respect to compliance with drinking water standards and the DoE is near complete with this process.
DPNR stands ready to assist the Board of Education and the Department of Education with the opening of schools in any way we can.

If you have any further questions or concerns please feel free to contact Austin Callwood, Director of the Division of Environmental Protection, at 340-774-3320.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jean-Pierre Oriol
Commissioner