Good Morning Honorable Senator Marvin Blyden,
And all member of the Committee on Housing, Transportation & Telecommunications
Of the 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Guests and listening audience.

I am Erma Chase Derima Executive Director of Methodist Training and Outreach Center

The Methodist Training & Outreach Center is the Lead Agency for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead by the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority. Our testimony today will be two-fold one on the information processed and collected during the 2019 and 2021 tentative data and secondly the day-to-day groundwork, challenges, and issues we address daily within the community.

**Continuum of Care**
The continuum of care of homelessness is designed to address the critical problems of homelessness within the territory through a coordinated community-based process of identifying needs and building a system of housing and services to address those needs. The approach is predicated on the understanding that homelessness is not caused merely by a lack of shelter, but involves a variety of underlying, unmet needs - physical, social, and economic.
The group is composed of representatives of organizations including nonprofits, homelessness providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, public housing agencies, social service providers, mental health agencies, veteran affairs, formerly homeless government agencies that service homelessness.

**Purpose and Scope**
The Continuum of Care program is designed to promote community-wide goals to end homelessness.
Provide funding to quickly rehouse those individuals and families while minimizing trauma and dislocation to those persons; promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The program is composed of transitional housing, permanent housing, supportive services, and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
2019 Point In Time
The Virgin Islands Continuum of Care conducted the required 2019 Point-In-Time survey on Saturday, January 26, 2019. **This survey was done on the unsheltered homeless in the territory.** The unduplicated numbers of unsheltered persons were three hundred fourteen (314) individuals and seventy-three (73) sheltered individuals that were counted.
In 2017 the unduplicated number that was reported unsheltered three were three hundred seven (307) individuals counted and sixty sheltered (66) individuals. **Based on comparison there’s an increase of 1% percent between 2017 and 2019 Point-In-Time count that was conducted by the CoC.**

The week of January 29, 2021, through February 5, 2021, the CoC conducted the required 2021 Point-In-Time count in the Territory, however, that information is still being processed and uncertified at this time. The numbers that you are seeing here is raw data and will be available by March 31, 2021.

Below you will find a few graphs showing the breakdown for years 2018 – 2021.
Point in Time 2017, 2019, & 2021 Unsheltered Comparison
2019 Point in Time Demographics

**Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client refused</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethnicity**

- Non-Hispanic/Latino: 161
- Hispanic/Latino: 4
- Data not collected: 35
- Client refused: 0
- Client doesn’t know: 0

**Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>&gt; 63</td>
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<tr>
<td>46-62</td>
<td>147</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-45</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>36</td>
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**Gender**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client refused</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data not collected</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2021 Point in Time Demographics

**Race**

- American Indian or Alaska Native: 200
- Black or African American: 0
- Client Doesn't Know: 147
- Client refused: 35
- Latino: 0
- Asian: 4
- White: 2
- Series5: 12

**Ethnicity**

- Non-Hispanic/Latino: 161
- Hispanic/Latino: 4
- Data not collected: 35
- Client refused: 0
- Client doesn't know: 0
- Ethnicity: 200
Through the Eyes of the Agency:
Throughout the years of service MTOC has recognize the growing change and face of homelessness within the Territory. We have been present in the frontline in providing service and assisting to meeting the mandate of providing service to a population that struggles with Mental illness, substance abuse and physical challenges just to name a few.

In our quest to help end homelessness MTOC provides services to several specific populations along with the chronic homeless. Allow me to share with you those areas and services.

Veterans
The Methodist Training and Outreach Center provides services to Veterans and Families through The Supportive Service for Veterans and Families Program (SSVF). We have provided services to over 200 Veterans and families since the introduction of the SSVF Program to the territory, served 38 Veterans and families during the previous grant year, and 32 Veterans and families since the COVID-19 pandemic with emergency housing assistance, rental assistance, utility assistance, transportation, and emergency food supplies with the additional COVID dollars received dedicated to Veterans enrolled in the SSVF Program. MTOC continues to exceed our yearly goals set by our grant agreement. We continue to provide services to qualified families and will continue to do so as funding is provided.

HOPWA
Housing Opportunity for Persons and Families Living With HIV AIDS program provides service to families yearly. This program is designed to meet the needs of those persons living with HIV/AIDS and requires housing to gain stability as we know stable housing means improved health. We provide rapid rehousing, homeless prevention, and rental assistance through the short-term mortgage and utility portion of the grant. We have assisted over 90 families within the past three years and continues to do so. This program is a referral-based program.

Transitional Housing
Methodist has three clients in transitional scattered sites.

Food Pantry
MTOC, has a food pantry that provides hot meals every third Thursday of the Month from 4pm -6pm. This pantry is funded by the staff of the agency. MTOC started with providing twenty-five (25) meals and now the number has grown to feed seventy-five (75) to one hundred (100) families within the community monthly.

Single Room Occupancy
To help clients regain the ability to self-sustain and enter into permanent housing we provide housing to eight individuals through the Single Room Occupancy program. We
currently house five (5) females and three (3) males. With this program, there is a waiting list of over 20 people seeking housing.

Methodist provides rental assistance and security deposits through other funding obtained through **The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands**. All of our grants are HUD-funded and are earmarked to specific programs. The Methodist Training and Outreach Center has been able to assist over Three hundred families through partnerships outside of Territorial Federal grants that we have between December 2018 and January 1, 2021. We continue to work with all supporting agencies in assisting qualified clients to access the necessary services need.

During the COVID pandemic, we have recognized an uptake of thirty percent 30% of families seeking rental assistance, food, and financial assistance. We were granted funding through Community Foundation VI, SSVF, and HOPWA and were able to meet some of the needs of families who came seeking assistance.

It is the heart of Methodist Training & Outreach Center to be able to continue meeting the needs of the community through service and commitment.

We see the need for additional funding to be allocated to our agency along with other organizations that provide service to the homeless community. Our heart and pulse of the homeless population keep us striving to help end homelessness within the territory. As we look outside our office door, we see the need for housing dollars to provide housing to those persons that need someplace to call home along with persons to navigate them back to sustainability and the community.

As a service provider, I am here to seek local funding to assist MTOC in providing transitional housing to work in tandem with the Virgin Island Housing Finance Authority Emergency housing program. MTOC works hand in hand with the Department of Human Services, Virgin Islands Housing Authority, Department of Justice, and many other agencies seeking housing assistance for families in need. In the process of service from a nonprofit organization, we understand the issues, challenges, and need to help end homelessness and we also recognize that no one agency can accomplish this on its own.

On this Journey to end homelessness, we ask that we are considered a part of the puzzle in obtaining funding to continue providing services to the less fortunate of our community.

This ends my testimony. I thank you for inviting me to speak on homelessness in our community.