

logo not found or type unknown

V.I. Board of Nurse Licensure Hosts Territory-Wide Appreciation Events to Celebrate Nurses' Dedication and Resilience

The V.I. Board of Nurse Licensure held its first-ever appreciation events across the territory, honoring nurses for their resilience, while highlighting workforce shortages, regulatory efforts, and ongoing support for a stronger, more sustainable system

Community Center / **Published On May 31, 2025 07:29 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 31, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



Group photo of nurses and V.I. Board of Nurse Licensure members taken at the Sydnee Lee Event Center on Thursday, May 29, 2025. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The Virgin Islands Board of Nurse Licensure (VIBNL) continued its first-ever series of nurse appreciation events this week, honoring the territory's registered nurses, licensed

practical nurses, and certified nursing assistants for their tireless contributions to healthcare across the islands. Following a successful event on St. Thomas last week, the St. Croix celebration was held Thursday at the Sydnee Lee Event Center. A St. John event is also in the works.

The initiative was the result of a collective effort from the board, who wanted to formally recognize the work of nurses—not just as healthcare providers, but as essential pillars of Virgin Islands society. “At the Virgin Islands Board of Nurse Licensure, we’re the regulators,” explained Executive Director Carmen Vanterpool-Romney. “But as regulators, we also want nurses to know how much they are appreciated.”

This marked the first time VIBNL has hosted appreciation events of this kind. “It didn’t matter whether you were active or not,” Ms. Vanterpool-Romney said. “Once you’re a nurse, you’re a nurse for life.”



Chairwoman Tanicia Penn addressed attendees with a message that was humorous, heartfelt, and deeply appreciative. “Nurses are the superheroes of healthcare—even if they don’t wear capes because, let’s face it, they don’t go well with scrubs anyway,” she said in her speech. Referencing the post-hurricane environment and the long shifts nurses face without seeing lunch breaks, she added, “You juggle more than just charts and medications. You are the heart of healthcare.”

The board took the opportunity to highlight the challenges facing nurses, especially in the post-hurricane era, when the territory lost a significant portion of its healthcare workforce. Although over 1,000 registered nurses are currently licensed, the number of licensed practical nurses remains very low—reportedly as few as 16. Certified nursing assistants are also in short supply. VIBNL is working to increase those numbers, but challenges with testing persist.



Nurse shortages continue to impact facilities like the Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix. In a conversation with The Consortium, one nurse explained, “We definitely don’t have the supplies we need to provide the quality care the community deserves. But the nurses here work hard with what they have.” She said despite the negative attention on social media, the staff genuinely care for the community and emphasized that government support for the hospital should be a top priority. “This is the only hospital in St. Croix. The needs of the hospital should be a priority because it affects the whole community,” she added.

During Thursday’s St. Croix event, the room was filled with laughter and camaraderie, as nurses participated in word search games and trivia. Elders in the profession were recognized, including the eldest educator in St. Thomas and other longtime contributors.



The Nurse Practice Act, passed in 1982, was mentioned as a key milestone in the development of the VIBNL, which has been in existence for over 40 years.

Looking ahead, Ms. Vanterpool-Romney discussed the potential of compact nursing legislation, made possible through the efforts of Senator Kurt Violet. Once enacted, the [compact](#) would allow

nurses to practice across state lines without needing multiple licenses—much like the REAL ID system used for driver’s licenses. While this would provide local nurses with mobility and greater professional opportunities, Ms. Vanterpool-Romney acknowledged the “double-edged sword” nature of the change. “It’s going to give nurses the opportunity to leave just as easily,” she said. “We want nurses to stay.”

Asked what incentives could help keep nurses in the territory, Ms. Vanterpool-Romney emphasized the need for both appreciation and meaningful support. “We want this to be an event where nurses can slow down and relax. Most of them don’t even get a full meal break,” she noted.



The board continues to explore ways to promote retention through education, incentives, and support services, while reminding the community that formal complaints, documentation, and photographic evidence help the board address concerns such as illegal nursing activity. “Otherwise it’s hearsay,” Ms. Vanterpool-Romney said.

Chair Tanicia Penn’s speech echoed that sentiment, closing with: “Let us celebrate you—the backbone, the heart of healthcare. Thank you for every life you touch, every smile you share, and every time you go above and beyond.”



The V.I. Board of Nurse Licensure thanked its board members:

- Tanicia Penn, RN (Chair)
- Brittany Dawson, PhD (Vice Chair)
- Arnelle Comissiong, RN (Treasurer)
- Elizabeth Dumas, CRNA
- Marion Wilson, LPN
- Lydia Ellis, LPN
- Juliette Petty, RN

Staff

- Carmen Vanterpool-Romney, Executive Director (STT)
- Celia Sebastien, Executive Management Officer (STT)
- Joycelyn McFarlande, Operations Director (STX)
- Grace Warner, Administrative Specialist (STT)
- D'Vonte J. Xavier, Administrative Specialist (STT)
- Sherise Joseph, Administrative Specialist (STX)
- Delva Daniel, Administrative Specialist (STX)
- Kimberly Cruz, Compliance Administrative Specialist (STX)

The Board also extended gratitude to its vendors: Seaside Market and Deli and Starlight Promotions, for their support of the events.