

The Virgin Islands Consortium

D.L.C.A. Hiring Firm To Analyze Food Cost In USVI To Determine Whether Residents Are Victims Of Price Gouging

Business / **Published On June 21, 2019 09:12 AM /**

Shenneth Canegata **June 21, 2019**



ST. CROIX – Richard Evangelista, Governor Albert Bryan’s commissioner nominee for the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (D.L.C.A.), testified Thursday during his nomination hearing in the Committee on Rules and Judiciary that analyzing the cost of food in the territory to determine if Virgin Islands residents are getting the most for their money is on his list of priorities. Mr. Evangelista intends to create a request for proposal to hire a firm to do just that: review the existing cost of food in the territory and determine if residents are victims of price gouging.

D.L.C.A. plans to involve the community by creating consumer advocate groups, in both districts, comprised of volunteers that will collaborate with licensing to educate residents and regulate consumer affairs by reinitiating monthly food basket surveys, scanner surveys, bi-weekly fuel surveys, random store inspections and weekly food expiration inspections throughout the V.I. and publish the results.

The collected data will be used to educate the populous, bring awareness, and encourage customers to shop where they get the "best bang for their buck," driving competition in their best interest.

The commissioner nominee said he intends to move swiftly with the initiative, and D.L.C.A., he said, will reach out to residents in the coming months to request that volunteers come together to form the advocate groups, working alongside D.L.C.A. to empower the community to shape the consumer world into one the territory deserves.

Mr. Evangelista said D.L.C.A. intends to hire the firm to not only analyze food cost, but transportation costs and any other factor. The aim is to uncover whether or not businesses are utilizing fair and honest practices when pricing goods in the territory, and if their profit margin is marginal, exorbitant, or within normal limits. D.L.C.A. anticipates including wholesalers and retailers in the study as well.

Relative to his nomination, which was approved by the committee, Mr. Evangelista testified that he felt fully equipped to be at D.L.C.A.'s helm. He listed his qualifications to the committee and thanked Mr. Bryan for placing confidence in him to improve the department. Most of his professional experience has been spent entrenched in various positions within the V.I. Government. He is a first-generation Virgin Islander; the son of Filipino parents who migrated to the V.I. in the 1960's to assist with the healthcare system. He credits them for instilling V.I. pride and joy in him that he and his wife, Wanda, now pass on to their daughter. He attributes his success to the support he has received from his parents and his wife.

Senator Alicia Barnes commended the commissioner nominee on his testimony and said that he presented a very clear path and identified how the department would tackle the challenges as it relates to consumer protection in the territory. "How outdated is our consumer code?" she asked. "When was it enacted? Do you know of specific updates to specific sections for relevance in today's business environment?" According to Mr. Evangelista, the consumer code has not been updated since 1995.

Ms. Barnes also asked about penalties associated with a business's failure to submit a price list, along with penalties associated with price gouging. Mr. Evangelista responded by assuring Ms. Barnes that he would consult D.L.C.A.'s in-house legal team regarding updating the consumer rules and regulations to bring them up to date.

Senator Javan James inquired about the name of the firm that would be hired to conduct the food cost analysis. The commissioner nominee said that D.L.C.A. has to first issue the request for proposal before it could select a firm. However, Mr. Evangelista said he wanted the information dispensed so that wholesalers and retailers that are not in compliance, and those that may be price gouging, could get their operations in order.

Mr. James said the food cost analysis should be performed routinely and that it would be beneficial to alternate between firms instead of using the same one each time an analysis is done. The commissioner nominee agreed.

Mr. Evangelista's nomination will be forwarded to the full body for final consideration.

© Viconsortium 2026