GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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Statement by Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley for Nurses Week 2026

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REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE VINCENT O. WHEATLEY

MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

NURSES WEEK 2026

A very pleasant and blessed Virgin Islands morning to all of you. I am Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, Minister for Health and Social Development and I want to start by wishing all of our incredible nurses **Happy Nurses Week**!!

I extend warm greetings to our nurses, healthcare professionals, community partners, and all residents of these beautiful Virgin Islands who have gathered to recognise and celebrate this important occasion.

This week, we celebrate the heart of healthcare: **YOU**, our nurses. The professionals who somehow manage to be caregivers, counsellors, advocates, problem-solvers, peacekeepers, and miracle workers… sometimes all before lunchtime.

This year's theme, "**Our Nurses. Our Future: Empowered Nurses Save Lives** ," could not be more fitting, because every day, our nurses do exactly that — save lives, restore hope, calm fears, and provide comfort during some of the most difficult moments a person may ever face.

Today, we pause not only to recognise a profession, but to honour a calling. A calling defined by compassion, discipline, and an unwavering commitment to caring for others.

Nursing requires far more than clinical skill and technical knowledge. It requires patience, empathy, resilience, and an enormous heart. Caring for people at their most vulnerable, advocating for their needs, and serving as a pillar of strength in moments of uncertainty are among the most profound aspects of the nursing profession.

Nurses Week holds a special place within this Ministry because nursing lies at the very heart of healthcare delivery. Quite simply, the care and support provided across our health services would not be possible without you.

Whether in the hospital wards, clinics, community outreach initiatives, or emergency response efforts, your impact is felt from The Settlement to Great

Harbour. You bridge the gap between clinical care and emotional support, ensuring that every patient is treated not just as a case, but as a person.

We have seen, time and time again, the extraordinary resilience of our nurses. Whether responding to public health challenges, managing increasing demands within our healthcare system, or adapting to new technologies and approaches to care,

our nurses continue to rise to the occasion with professionalism and grace. Your ability to remain steadfast, even in the face of adversity, is nothing short of commendable.

This year, as we continue to promote a culture where individuals are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their health, our nurses remain central to that mission.

You are not only caregivers, but educators, mentors, and advocates. Through health education, preventative care, and community engagement, you empower individuals and families to make informed decisions, adopt healthier lifestyles, and seek care early.

In many ways, our nurses are champions of health. Leading by example, demonstrating the importance of compassion, patience, and diligence. Reminding us that healthcare is not only about treatment, but about prevention, awareness, and holistic wellbeing.

To our nurses, I say this with sincerity and gratitude: your work does not go unnoticed. We see the long hours you dedicate. We understand the sacrifices you make, often placing the needs of others before your own.

We recognise the emotional strength it takes to provide care in difficult circumstances, and the quiet courage you display each day. You are the heartbeat of our healthcare system, and your contributions continue to shape healthier, stronger communities.

Today, I especially want to encourage you to continue growing, learning, leading, and advocating for yourselves. Empowered nurses do not only improve patient

care — they shape the future of healthcare itself. Your voices matter. Your expertise matters. Your wellbeing matters.

While we celebrate your service, I also encourage you to take care of yourselves. Please remember that even superheroes need rest, hydration, and at least one proper meal during a shift.

Most importantly, I encourage each of you to continue giving your very best, even in moments when you may feel unappreciated or overlooked. Very often, the true fruits of your labour are not realised immediately.

The sacrifices you make today, the standards you uphold, and the care you provide may create opportunities and improvements that are ultimately enjoyed by future generations, including your own children and grandchildren. For that reason, never lose sight of the value and lasting impact of the work you do each day.

As a government, we remain firmly committed to supporting you. We understand that in order for you to provide the highest standard of care, you must be supported, valued, and empowered.

It is in this spirit that this Government is embarking on major reforms within the healthcare sector. We are strengthening our systems, infrastructure, and legislative framework, all with **YOU** in mind.

Particular attention is also being given to the area of remuneration, with efforts underway to bring salaries in line with current realities and expectations.

After all…it takes cash to care.

We recognise, too, the importance of creating opportunities for advancement within the profession, through continued investment in education and professional development, ensuring that our nurses are not only retained, but inspired to grow, lead, and innovate within the field of healthcare.

I also wish to take this moment to encourage our young people across The Virgin Islands to consider nursing as a career. It is a noble profession that offers purpose, stability, and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others.

Nursing is about service, leadership, and lifelong learning. It is a pathway through which you can contribute directly to the wellbeing of your community and your country.

As we celebrate Nurses Week, I encourage all of us to reflect on the invaluable role that nurses play in our lives.

Each of us, at some point, has been touched by the care and compassion of a nurse, whether personally or through a loved one.

Let us take the time this week to express our appreciation. A simple thank you, a kind word, or a gesture of recognition can make a meaningful difference.

To every nurse across The Virgin Islands, I extend heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Government and people of this Territory. Your dedication, your professionalism, and your compassion are deeply valued.

Your impact is immeasurable, and your service continues to inspire confidence and hope within our healthcare system.

As we continue this important work, let us continue to work together to strengthen healthcare in The Virgin Islands, ensuring that every resident has access to quality, equitable, and effective care…and at the centre of that vision will always be our nurses.

So, this week, we celebrate you.

We honour you.

And most importantly, we thank you.

Happy Nurses Week, and may you continue to inspire, uplift, and save lives every single day.

May God bless each and every one of you, and may He continue to bless these beautiful Virgin Islands.

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Additional Documents or Media

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