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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**VIRGIN ISLANDS HOUSING FINANCE AUTHORITY DISBURSES \$31 MILLION IN  
PAYMENTS TO FEMA STEP CONTRACTORS**

ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands – The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) announced today that FEMA has released a portion of the \$233 million that it obligated to the Territory at the end of December for the Sheltering & Temporary Essential Power (STEP) program, known locally as the Emergency Home Repairs Virgin Islands (EHRVI) program. Approximately \$31 million of a series of payments is being disbursed to the program’s prime contractors, AECOM and APTIM.

The STEP program, which was implemented after Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused devastating destruction throughout the USVI in 2017, has been plagued by funding delays, but was successful in repairing over 6,500 homes in record time.

“We are very proud of what we accomplished through the STEP program, including FEMA’s first permanent roof pilot program that repaired and fortified over 1,500 roofs,” said VIHFA Executive Director Daryl Griffith. “Despite the funding delays, which have been very frustrating for dozens and dozens of contractors, the program enabled over 24,000 residents to safely shelter in their own homes when St. Thomas was struck by Hurricane Dorian in August of last year.”

Griffith continued, “Since the STEP program ended in April 2019, we have now paid out over \$211 million so far to the prime contractors, AECOM and APTIM, who in turn issue payments to their tiers of subcontractors that they hired to repair thousands of homes across the three major islands. Both my VIHFA financial team and our accounting firm are continuing to work with our



prime contractors and FEMA officials to get hundreds more invoices processed and approved through a very complicated, highly regulated, multi-agency approval process.”

After months and months of prior negotiations between FEMA leadership, Griffith and Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne Williams-Octalien, U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Albert Bryan and his team sat down last October at FEMA’s headquarters in Washington, DC with then-Acting Administrator Peter Gaynor to present solutions in expediting the laborious approval process and quelling disputed items.

“I am very grateful for the collaboration Administrator Gaynor and his staff have shown to help get our recovery back on track with the release of this next iteration of funds,” said Bryan. This first \$31 million of a total of \$233 million, will pay our very patient primes and their subcontractors for their labor costs, management services, and inspections.”

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