

Plaskett Hails Passage of Funding Bill in Congress as Boost to U.S. Virgin Islands

Congresswoman Plaskett announces significant funding boosts to support local entrepreneurs, disaster recovery, and more

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has announced that the successful passage and presidential signing of the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill earmarks substantial investments for the benefit of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The funding package, highlighted for its bipartisan support in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, encompasses a wide array of allocations designed to bolster the economy, enhance public safety, and support hardworking families across the nation, including those in the Virgin Islands. "This appropriations bill invests in critical government programs and services to support education, job training, and placement programs as well as access to affordable, high-

quality childcare," Ms. Plaskett stated.

Significant provisions within the legislation include \$1.1 billion for the Small Business Administration to assist underserved entrepreneurs, \$20.3 billion for major disaster response and recovery activities, and allocations to combat the fentanyl crisis. Additionally, the package secures funding for Rural Health Programs, Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Grants, School-Based Mental Health Services, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, among others.

Ms. Plaskett emphasized the historic nature of the investments made through the mini omnibus bill, particularly in areas crucial to the Virgin Islands such as education, healthcare, and climate change mitigation. "The minibus includes historic investments in key areas: Head Start and childcare programs, education, job training and placement programs," she explained. Furthermore, it "strengthens our nation's defense capabilities, reaffirms our global commitments to combating climate change and improving global health, as well as allocates funding for border security and cybersecurity."

The passage of the appropriations package represents a victory for House Democrats, who, according to Plaskett, "safeguarded investments in our communities and rejected many of the harmful proposals advanced by the House Republicans – including funding cuts to education and climate-related policies."