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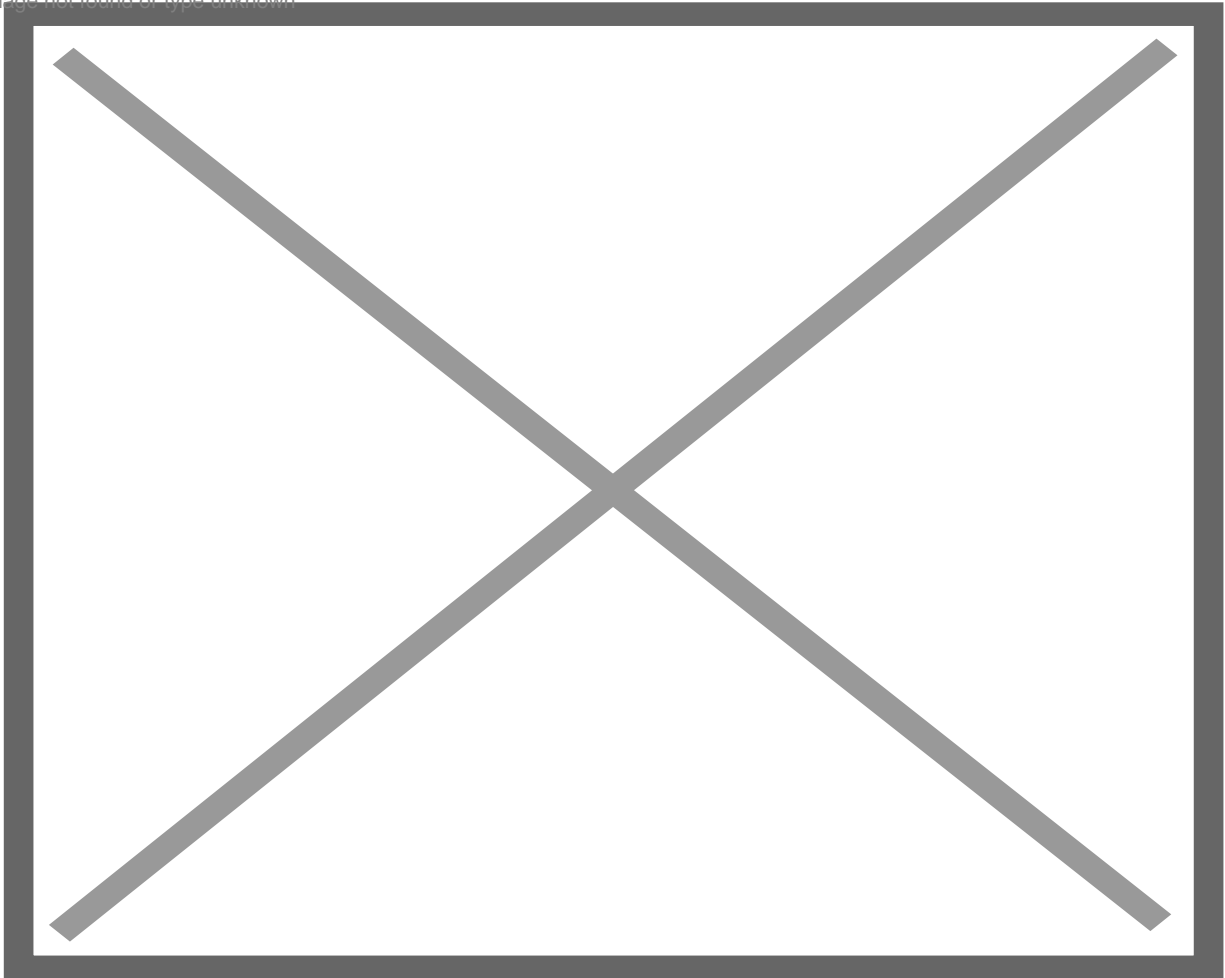
USVI Breaks Ground on Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute Reconstruction

FEMA Obligates Millions for State-of-the-Art Facility

Health / **Published On November 07, 2023 05:31 AM /**

Staff Consortium **November 07, 2023**

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Officials participate in groundbreaking ceremony on Nov. 4, 2023. By. OFFICE OF DISASTER RECOVERY

In a landmark moment for healthcare in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Governor Albert Bryan Jr., alongside members of the 35th Legislature and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, celebrated the groundbreaking of the Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute (CKCI) on November 4th. The institute's restoration comes after its closure due to the severe impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Attorney Tina Comissiong, the CEO of Schneider Regional Medical Center, expressed the community's enthusiasm for the institute's revival: "The Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute is an essential part of our commitment to providing healthcare excellence right here at home, and we are extremely happy to witness this groundbreaking and begin the journey to its rebuilding."

FEMA's funding of \$50 million, obligated in June 2022, paved the way for the demolition and to begin the solicitation phase for a contractor who would rebuild the shuttered facility.

The project, according to Darryl A. Smalls, the executive director of the Territorial Redevelopment Team, is "a significant milestone in our mission to enhance healthcare in the Virgin Islands."

Dee Beacher-Brown, representing the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, conveyed the Kimelman family's passion for the project: "The Kimelman family's enduring commitment to the U.S. Virgin Islands and their passionate support for this project has been nothing short of inspiring."

The reconstruction plan managed by J. Benton Construction promises a facility resilient to natural disasters, with modern infrastructure that meets the highest standards of healthcare service.

Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, director of the Office of Disaster Recovery, acknowledged FEMA's role and highlighted the Bipartisan Budget Act OF 2018, which ensures that the Virgin Islands receive the necessary funds for rebuilding to industry standards.

The initiative has garnered widespread support, including from Congresswoman Plaskett, who has been instrumental in advocating for the territory at the federal level. Plaskett's efforts were pivotal in the lobbying for funds through the Bipartisan Budget Act, which has been crucial in securing the financial backing for this and other vital projects across the Virgin Islands.

Her role in facilitating the necessary federal support emphasizes the collaborative effort required to bring such significant projects to fruition, from local authorities to the halls of Congress.

Governor Bryan emphasized the importance of collective effort for progress in his closing remarks: "In order to persist in the mission to build back better, we all must continue working together, staying focused on the goal – to make sure that the people of the Territory have access to quality healthcare, education, workforce development options, and housing."

With the promise of a new beginning, the groundbreaking of CKCI reaffirms the administration's dedication to a robust healthcare system. The construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.