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Plaskett Secures Over \$10 Million for USVI Community Projects in Federal Bill

A windfall for local development: Congressional delegate's requests to benefit education, healthcare, and more

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Del. Stacey Plaskett (D-V.I.) appears during the fourth voting round for Speaker on day two of the 118th Congress session, Wednesday, January 4, 2023. By. THE HILL

The passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2024 by the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this week was a moment of triumph for Congressional Delegate Stacey Plaskett, who reported that twelve of her office's Community Project Funding Requests were included in the measure.

“The requests reflect the great priority my office places on the need for education, health care, community development and to provide more economic opportunities in our most vulnerable populations,” Ms. Plaskett said in a statement issued on Friday.

Once the legislation is approved by the Senate and signed into law by President Joe Biden, over \$10 million will be directed towards local entities and agencies including the St. Croix Foundation, My Brother’s Workshop, and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, among several others, for the implementation of community projects.

“This congressional allocation affirms the power of civic-public collaboration which can manifest radical and systemic social transformation in underserved, marginalized places like the U.S. territories,” said St. Croix Foundation for Community Development Executive Director Deanna James. The Foundation has been allocated \$1 million to develop and revitalize available affordable housing units and affordable commercial building space in Christiansted.

St. Croix Farmers in Action also received an allocation of a million dollars. The organization will use the funds to rehabilitate a 1-million-gallon cistern on the Bethlehem Sugar Factory site, as well as two smaller cisterns in the same area. The rehabilitated cisterns “will be a huge asset to the farmers of St. Croix...and will provide a critical water source to the farmer in times of drought,” said Kareem Edwards, a board member for St. Croix Farmers in Action.

Other agencies to which funds have been allocated are as follows:

- \$1,666,279 to Lord God of Sabaoth Evangelical Lutheran Church to improve and rehabilitate three real properties held by the Church within the city center of Christiansted, St. Croix, to increase affordable housing supply and re-activate a critical neighborhood service center to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged youth, seniors, and the wider St. Croix community.
- \$1,000,000 to My Brother’s Workshop to build Main Campus Building 2, a building which will provide additional education and workforce development that will lead to employment and better financial stability.
- \$850,000 to the Virgin Islands Architecture Center for Built Heritage and Crafts to rehabilitate blighted property, the Old Barracks property on Hospital Street in Christiansted, into an historic preservation educational center that will teach, train, and certify Virgin Islands young people in the building arts of stone, wood, iron, and other crafts prevalent in the U.S. Virgin Islands and other historic U.S. and Caribbean towns.
- \$1,000,000 to the Caribbean Centers for Boys & Girls of the Virgin Islands to rebuild and rehabilitate youth centers that were severely damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
- \$510,000 to the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) for Gustave Quetel Fish Market facility renovation, the design and construction of solar lighting installments at the facility, and structural improvements to the roof.

- \$850,000 to the World Ocean School to rehabilitate the National Historic Landmark, Roseway, for the benefit of educating primarily under-resourced students.
- \$800,000 for the Army Corps of Engineers to continue and complete the post authorization change report required to be completed and submitted to Congress for the Army Corps to carry out the project for navigation for Christiansted Harbor.
- \$300,000 for the Army Corps of Engineers to continue and complete the post authorization change report required to be completed and submitted to Congress for the Army Corps to carry out the project for navigation for Charlotte Amalie Harbor.
- \$438,000 to Coral World Ocean and Reef Initiative to investigate the effects of the influx and decomposition of sargassum as well as monitor nesting beaches for hatchling sea turtles trapped or distressed by sargassum.
- \$963,000 to the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) to carry out industrial solutions or direct removal of harmful sargassum algal blooms in the Virgin Islands.