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Nurses Association Demands Transparency on Government's Plan Post-Pafford Departure

Amid a busy hurricane season, Virgin Islands State Nurses Association seeks transparency on how the government plans to mitigate the impact of losing key medical services

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With Pafford's departure, the USVI loses two ambulances on St. Thomas/St. John, and eight paramedics territory-wide.

A letter from the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association is calling for more transparency when it comes to the government's plans to cover the gaps left by the [departure of Pafford Medical Services](#) from the territory.

?“Although we are unaware of any immediate negative impact on nurse staffing,” the letter admitted, “nurses are members of the health care institutions and share in the delivery of quality medical and health services to the community.”?

Signed by VISNA President Evet Rivera, the letter argues that Pafford’s departure, in the midst of a hurricane season [forecasters expect to be very active](#), “could not have come at a worse time.”

Last week, VI Fire and Emergency Medical Services Director Antonio Stevens [told lawmakers](#) that the agency will lose two ambulances on St. Thomas/St. John, and eight paramedics territory-wide. Now, Ms. Rivera worries about whether local EMS/Fire Services are left with the requisite “manpower, ambulances and emergency vehicles needed to cover the territory.”

Although Governor Albert Bryan Jr. signaled that the government would not have been able to sustain Pafford’s [“financial burden forever.”](#) Ms. Rivera nevertheless exhorts authorities, particularly Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion, herself a registered nurse and member of VISNA, “to do everything possible to retain some of the services delivered by Pafford.”?

The State Nurses Association is also seeking clarity on what the governor’s stated “comprehensive contingency plans” to prevent disruption in the healthcare sector entail. “Clear communication helps to relieve fear and as much as is possible we respectfully ask for some more details,” the letter said.

According to VISNA Executive Director Joyce Heyliger, “Union leadership was not made aware of any negative impact on nurse staffing” as a result of Pafford’s departure, and thus there has not yet been any discussion with employers on the matter.