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Fonseca Calls for a Hospital State of Emergency as Medical Centers Face Deterioration, Staffing Shortages, and Long Wait Times

Fonseca mentions critical concerns, including aging modular units at Juan F. Luis Hospital, reduced emergency bed capacity, and inadequate staffing, as he calls for a state of emergency to accelerate the rebuilding of medical facilities across the USVI

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Senator Ray Fonseca on Tuesday announced that he has urged Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to declare a Hospital State of Emergency to address critical challenges facing the territory's healthcare system. Fonseca highlighted ongoing staffing and equipment shortages, lack of basic

supplies, and the deteriorating state of hospital infrastructure as key reasons for immediate action.

He stressed the pressing need for emergency funding to accelerate the design, procurement, and construction of the territory's healthcare facilities, including the Juan F. Luis Medical Center on St. Croix, the Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas, and the Myra Keating Clinic on St. John.

According to Fonseca, the modular hospital units currently operating at the Juan F. Luis Medical Center are nearing the end of their seven-year lifespan, raising concerns about significant deterioration by 2028. "Our residents have to wait too long for adequate care, and we have a shortage of emergency beds," he said, noting that the temporary facility has only 14 emergency beds, a 22% reduction from the previous hospital's 18.

The senator also questioned whether the new Juan F. Luis Medical Center could be completed within three years. Once finished, the facility is expected to provide 18 emergency beds and a total of 117 patient beds, a notable upgrade from the current modular setup.

In addition to advocating for the declaration of a state of emergency, Mr. Fonseca announced plans to introduce legislation aimed at increasing emergency room staffing. His proposal includes hiring additional emergency room physicians, nurses, and patient care technicians to address the territory's healthcare workforce shortages.

Fonseca further stressed the urgency of addressing long emergency room wait times and ensuring that residents have access to adequate care.