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Emergency Hospital Funds Not a Solution, Only Temporary Fix, Governor Bryan Warns

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. cautions that the recent \$13 million in emergency funding for public hospitals addresses only immediate symptoms, emphasizing the need for sustainable, community-supported solutions to the longstanding healthcare funding crisis.

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The Schneider Regional Medical Center in St. Thomas. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Emergency funding recently provided for hospitals in the territory is not a solution, said Governor Albert Bryan Jr. on Monday, as he announced the signing of several key pieces of legislation during a press briefing from Government House.

“For decades, we have been confronted by cost overruns and the incredibly increasing cost of healthcare,” Governor Bryan noted. Despite signing Bill 36-0047 into law, [which provides \\$13 million in immediate funding](#) for the territory's two public hospitals, he emphasized to the public that “this money doesn't solve any problems.”

“It solves symptoms of the problems,” Governor Bryan explained. “As a community, we're going to have to make a decision to fund our hospitals at the right level and to hold their leadership accountable for all the money that we put in there.”

But what does that accountability look like? Responding to a question from a Consortium journalist, the governor acknowledged that with rapid turnover at the top, it would be difficult to hold any one individual responsible for the financial quandary the hospitals currently find themselves in.

“If you look at JFL...they've had like, seven or eight people running that hospital in the last 10 years. So we can't even hold somebody accountable, because [the CEO that just came](#) is brand new,” Governor Bryan noted. “The CEO in St. Thomas is essentially brand new too,” he said. Noting that local Virgin Islanders now hold the top management position at both hospitals, Governor Bryan called for “tough decisions” to be made to stabilize the facilities.

Long term fiscal sustainability for public healthcare institutions is imperative, Governor Bryan says. “It's important that we recognize that these hospitals will never, ever be able to be sustainable until we all pay our fair share into a health development fund,” he said. “We can't keep putting patchwork into places to support the operations of hospitals.”

The governor promised to roll out plans to adequately fund the hospitals “in the coming months.” Once those initiatives have been unveiled, Governor Bryan said they would need the support of the public – and the Legislature – to come to fruition.