

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator Sarauw Calls for Stricter Measures to Battle Coronavirus: 'It is Unfathomable at This Point Not to Take Stronger Action'

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Even as Governor Bryan held a press conference on Thursday to announce an escalation to his administration's coronavirus response, aircrafts of major carriers landed at the Cyril E. King Airport. By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

Senator Janelle Sarauw on Saturday called on Governor Albert Bryan to implement more stringent rules to combat the coronavirus, the pathogen causing the deadly Covid-19 disease. She said with the recent doubling in confirmed cases from three to six in a matter of days, and a total of 71 suspected cases — called Persons Under Investigation — being sent for testing as of Friday, a heightened effort from Mr. Bryan is desperately

needed.

"At this rate, the rapid growth in case numbers is alarming yet the ports remain open with no arrival screening measures in place for travelers coming into the territory," the senator said. "It is unfathomable at this point not to take stronger action as we need to protect those who are most vulnerable to this virus."

Ms. Sarauw said Hurricanes Irma and Maria wreaked havoc on the islands and the infrastructure of the hospitals have not been fully restored. "Because of our very fragile healthcare system, coupled with the overwhelming number of residents that fall within the high-risk category of COVID-19, there is no way the hospitals or Department of Health can sustain services if there is a mass outbreak in the territory," she said.

With governments across the world implementing tough actions to combat the virulent disease, Ms. Sarauw urged the territory's leader to implement shelter in place to help protect Virgin Islanders and to limit the spread of COVID-19.

"It is better to be proactive than reactive, as history has proven," the senator said. "With COVID-19, there is no cure as yet and it is imperative that we take all measures to protect the people of the territory."

She added, "We still have tourists coming into the territory, people are not following the social distancing criteria and these are all potential risks. The governor must implement stronger measures. HIV/Aids was a pandemic, the flu of 1968 killed 50 million, and the Black Death killed 200 million. History tells us the grave consequences of inaction, delays and complacency. This government and many businesses are functioning like it is business as usual. It is not."

Senator Sarauw also urged the community to use proper discretion and to stay indoors as the territory must keep COVID-19 rates down.

She then turned her sights right back to Mr. Bryan: "With all due respect, governor, use the executive authority vested to you during a state of emergency in a moment like this to protect Virgin Islanders from those who are not complying. We must fall on the right side of history."