

The Virgin Islands Consortium

"We Cannot Be Touched": Doctor Defends V.I. Hospitals, Says Healthcare System Outperforms Similar-Sized Regions

Testifying before lawmakers, Dr. Frank Odlum said USVI hospitals provide advanced care comparable to larger cities, citing access to specialists rare for a population this size. "People have perception, and it ain't reality," the surgeon declared.

Health / **Published On October 29, 2025 06:31 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **October 29, 2025**



Dr. Frank Odlum says USVI hospitals are stronger than critics believe, praising medical staff and available specialties while insisting that local healthcare "cannot be touched" compared to other hospitals of similar size. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

The territory's hospitals are often on the receiving end of public scrutiny, with criticism often focusing on wait times and supply shortages. The Legislature, on more than one occasion, has appropriated funds specifically meant for [clearing delinquent payments to suppliers and maintaining a steady flow of critical resources](#). Now, one local doctor has assured lawmakers and the public that the hospitals are faring much better than many may think.

Dr. Frank Odlum appeared before the Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services on Tuesday for a status update on the local board of medical examiners, which he chairs. However, Dr. Odlum, addressed the topic of hospital operations from his perspective as a practicing general surgeon, affiliated with the Schneider Regional Medical Center. He was first questioned by Senator Ray Fonseca, the committee's chair, about supply stock.

"There's not a case that I need to do that I can't do because of supplies," Dr. Odlum affirmed. He told Sen. Fonseca that "we have an unbelievable team," referring to those responsible for supply management. Most challenges are typically due to financial constraints, he stated.

He reminded lawmakers that all who enter the hospital's door "get the care that they need," However, Dr. Odlum is acutely aware that "a huge percentage of that population cannot pay for it and will not pay for it." As the leadership of the territory's hospitals continues to reiterate, annual uncompensated care costs are a [major challenge to budgets](#) – over \$36 million estimated for this fiscal year alone.

"When you start spending that kind of money and there's no hopes of recouping...it's a rough one," Dr. Odlum lamented. It's why he told lawmakers that he was "impressed" by what the hospitals can accomplish despite the challenges they face.

Dr. Odlum was also adamant that the territory's healthcare systems are faring better than those in comparable locales, drawing on examples of the type of speciality medical services accessible in the territory.

"People have perception, and it ain't reality," he told Senator Novelle Francis, who asked for an overview of the "state of healthcare."

For Dr. Odlum, it is unfair to compare the territory's healthcare services to that of metropolitan cities on the mainland. "We can't compare it to Cleveland Clinic. You gotta compare us to a small town, a similar population, similar demographic, and look at the specialties that that small town has compared to us," he urged.

"We have an infectious disease specialist, where a town of this size would not. We have a perinatologist. We have general surgeons," he continued. "There is no hospital of our size that would have that. So when people ask me the state of it, we cannot be touched," Dr. Odlum declared.

"You name it: infectious disease, nephrology. We have people who come in who are supposedly specialists in certain things, and they don't do what we do," declared a confident Dr. Odlum.

He insisted that the services available in the Virgin Islands do not exist “in no small hospital like us.” Dr. Odium issued a challenge, perhaps to detractors of local healthcare services. “I challenge anybody to find it,” he stated.

His passionate defense was not contested by lawmakers. Instead, Sen. Francis replied on a supportive note, stating that “the Juan Luis Hospital saved my life as well.”

© Viconsortium 2026