

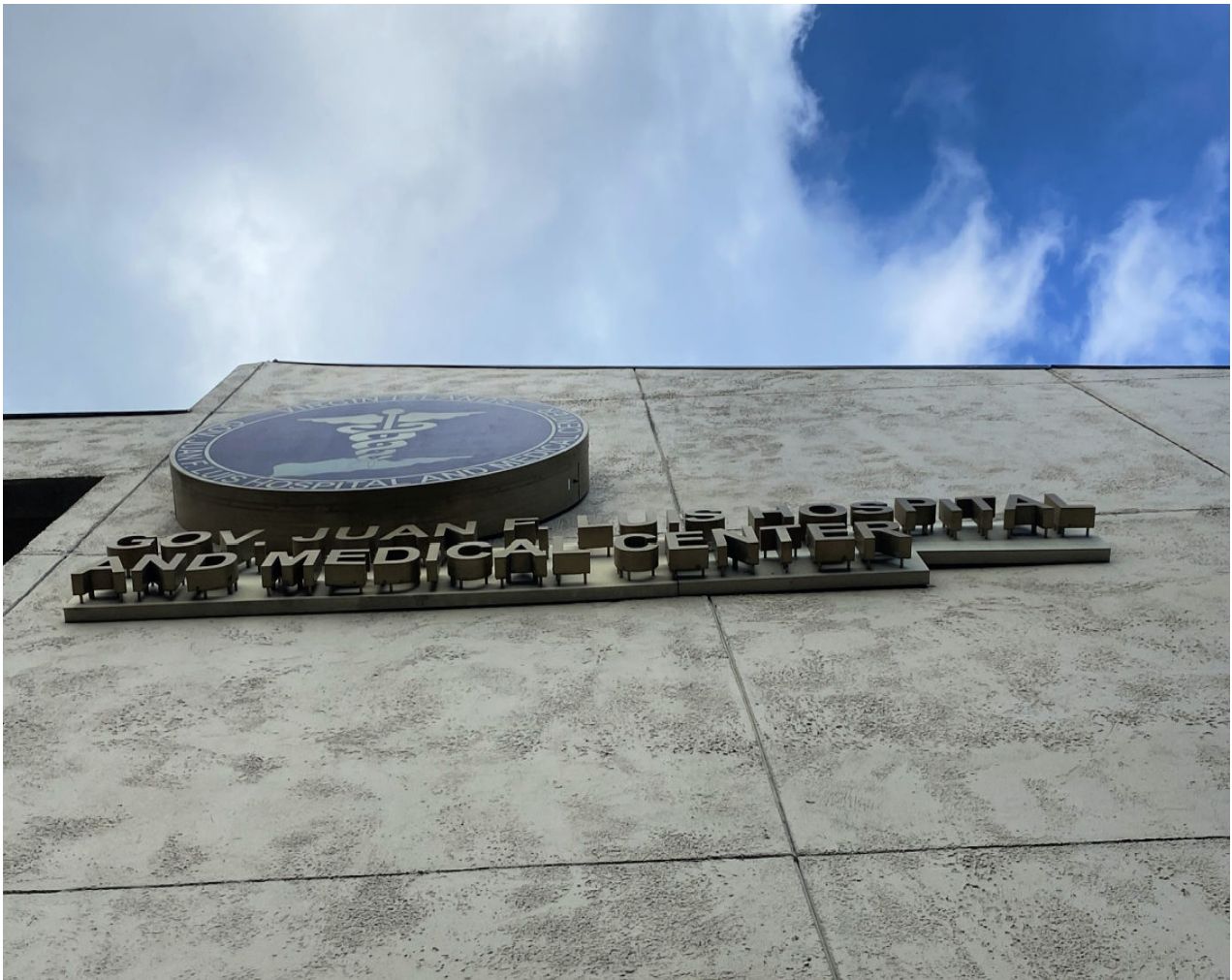
The Virgin Islands Consortium

“System Under Severe Strain”: Gittens Calls Emergency Meeting Over Mounting Crises at Territorial Hospitals

Sen. Kenneth Gittens is calling for an emergency meeting with hospital leadership, citing worsening ER delays, equipment failures, staffing issues, and financial mismanagement at JFL and SRMC that he says demand immediate accountability and solutions.

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Logo of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — Senate Vice President Kenneth L. Gittens is calling for an immediate emergency meeting with the Territorial Hospital Board and the chief executive officers of Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Governor Roy L. Schneider Hospital, citing what he described as an escalating operational, financial, and workforce crisis affecting both facilities.

Gittens said the request comes after months of mounting public concern over hospital conditions, including prolonged emergency room wait times, shortages of supplies, malfunctioning or outdated equipment, wage disparities, delayed payroll, and deteriorating working environments. In recent weeks, those concerns have intensified, he said, fueled by public statements from hospital employees and official advisories from hospital leadership warning residents of overwhelmed emergency departments and extended waiting periods.

“These are not isolated incidents. They are clear indicators of a system under severe strain,” Gittens said. “Our healthcare professionals are showing up every day under incredibly difficult circumstances, yet the problems persist and continue to worsen. This demands immediate, serious, and private discussions focused on solutions.”

The Senate vice president noted that the Legislature has repeatedly intervened to support the territory’s hospitals and other semi-autonomous agencies when they face financial shortfalls, often through appropriations and re-appropriations of public funds. While he acknowledged that such assistance has been necessary to keep essential services operating, Gittens stressed that continued financial support must be accompanied by accountability, transparency, and effective management.

“We do not have a money problem, we have a money management problem,” Gittens stated. “This is evident as the Legislature continues to appropriate and re-appropriate funding for semi-autonomous entities that were designed to generate their own revenues. The people of this Territory cannot continue to pay the price for systemic mismanagement.”

According to Gittens, the proposed emergency meeting would provide a confidential forum for candid discussion of sensitive financial, personnel, and operational issues, without jeopardizing patient privacy, employee protections, or ongoing negotiations. He said the goal is to identify immediate needs, evaluate leadership decisions, and determine what legislative actions may be necessary to stabilize hospital operations and safeguard both patients and staff.

Gittens added that any legislative steps deemed necessary — including potential funding reallocations or policy measures — should be addressed without delay, particularly as the territory approaches the Governor’s upcoming State of the Territory Address.

“Our hospitals are critical lifelines for our community,” he said. “The people deserve a healthcare system that works, employees deserve respect and reliability, and taxpayers deserve accountability. This emergency meeting is not optional — it is necessary.”