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## Darlene Baptiste Named CEO of JFL and SRMC as VI Hospitals Move Toward Unified Leadership

The appointment of the JFL CEO as chief executive of both hospitals marks a major step in the Gov't Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation's plan to consolidate operations, with Schneider CEO Tina Commissiong transitioning to another role.

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Current Juan F. Luis Hospital & Medical Center CEO Darlene A. Baptiste has now also been appointed chief executive officer of the Schneider Regional Medical Center, as the Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation moves forward with a plan to unify operations across the territory's public hospitals, the Consortium has learned.

Under the transition, Tina Commissiong, who was named permanent CEO of Schneider Regional Medical Center in 2022, will be placed in another role within the hospital system, according to information confirmed by the Consortium. Details about the scope of that role have not been publicly disclosed.

The leadership shift comes as GHHFC advances a systemwide integration strategy aimed at streamlining costs, consolidating governance, and improving services at both Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas and the Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.

GHHFC has scheduled a press conference for noon Friday. “The press conference will provide an important update on leadership and system integration for the territory’s public hospitals,” the corporation said in a statement.

The move follows months of public discussion and legislative scrutiny surrounding the financial stability and operational structure of the Virgin Islands’ hospital system.

In April 2025, ahead of a special session of the 36th Legislature, GHHFC chair Dr. Jerry Smith outlined a series of structural reforms he said were necessary to ensure long-term stability. In a letter to Senate President Milton Potter, Smith acknowledged the need for immediate financial support but stressed that “it must be accompanied by structural changes to ensure stability and avoid the cyclical nature of emergency relief.”

Among Smith’s recommendations was the establishment of a “reliable funding source” to support bond issuance, “enabling the system to make vendors whole and responsibly manage future debt service obligations,” which he said would allow the Territorial Board to focus on medium-term reforms.

Both Schneider Regional and Juan F. Luis Hospital have continued to face financial challenges, including uncompensated care. During a February 2025 hearing, Senator Clifford Joseph suggested that cost-cutting measures be considered and asked Office of Management and Budget Director Julio Rhymer for recommendations.

Rhymer argued that consolidation between the two hospitals was necessary, particularly in procurement, accounting, and systems. “We can't continue going down a road where we have two separate hospitals that don't procure together. You have accounting separately; you have systems that are separate,” he said.

He also called for consolidation of governance. “Currently we have two district boards and a territorial governing board. You need to have one board. Start there. That's the first process,” Rhymer said, warning that district-level decision-making undermines a systemwide approach.

“We really need to move forward and do something different, which means there are some hard decisions that have to be made,” he reiterated.

The appointment of Baptiste as territorial CEO and the reassignment of Commissiong represent the most concrete step yet toward the unified hospital system that officials have said is necessary to stabilize finances and improve operations across the territory.