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JFL Nurse Fired After Speaking About ER Security Won Arbitration; Union Says \$275K+ Compensation Still Unpaid

Michelle Montoya was fired days after speaking to the Consortium about a 2022 JFL emergency-room security lapse. An arbitrator later found no just cause for her termination; the nurses union says compensation topped \$275,000 and remains unpaid in 2026.

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Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center logo. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The territory's nursing union has asked the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands to enforce an arbitration award involving former Juan F. Luis Hospital emergency-room nurse

Michelle Montoya, who was fired days after speaking publicly about security failures at the hospital and was later found by an arbitrator to have been terminated without just cause.

The Virgin Islands State Nurses Association Collective Bargaining Unit says Montoya was owed just over \$275,000 as of February 2025, an amount that would continue increasing until the matter was fully resolved. The union alleges that JFL later promised to develop a payment proposal but stopped communicating, leaving the compensation unpaid.

The lawsuit is the second complaint filed in two days alleging that JFL failed to pay compensation connected to the wrongful termination of a nurse.

Firing Followed Emergency-Room Security Incident

The dispute traces back to May 2022, when [two individuals entered JFL's emergency room](#) following a shooting, exposing doctors and nurses working at the time to potential danger.

V.I. Consortium journalists obtained an incident report written by Montoya detailing security failures that occurred that evening as well as what she described as continuing weaknesses in emergency-room security operations.

Montoya was then secretary of the nursing union and spoke on the record with the Consortium about what she witnessed and her concerns for the safety of emergency-room employees.

Days after the Consortium published its report, then-JFL Chief Executive Officer Douglas Koch [fired Montoya](#).

In July 2022, the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association Collective Bargaining Unit moved to take the termination dispute to arbitration under its collective bargaining agreement with the hospital.

Arbitration Finds Termination Was Without Cause

An arbitration hearing was eventually held in October 2024.

Two months later, the arbitrator determined that Montoya had been terminated without just cause.

According to the arbitration findings, JFL failed to establish that information contained in the Consortium's reporting originated from Montoya leaking the confidential incident report rather than from her legitimate, on-the-record interview about her own experiences.

The arbitrator also concluded that JFL's allegations that Montoya had violated confidentiality requirements under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act were not supported by the evidence presented.

At that point, the arbitrator offered to help the hospital and union reach an agreement on the amount of compensation Montoya should receive because of her termination.

That process did not reach a resolution.

Arbitrator Says JFL Did Not Pay Him

According to the civil complaint, the compensation phase stalled because the arbitrator disclosed that JFL had not paid him for his services.

Without payment, he said he could not perform additional work on the matter.

The union subsequently undertook its own efforts to have the arbitration outcome implemented.

In February 2025, JFL was notified that Montoya was owed slightly more than \$275,000, according to the complaint.

The union said the amount would continue increasing until an agreement was fully executed.

JFL Counsel Promised Payment Proposal

In August 2025, correspondence from JFL's legal counsel indicated that the hospital would provide a proposal for paying the compensation.

According to the lawsuit, no proposal followed.

Communication between the hospital and the union's attorney subsequently stopped.

As of press time, Montoya had not received the compensation, prompting the union to ask Superior Court to enforce the arbitration award on her behalf.

Baptiste Told Lawmakers She Was Unaware of Pending Case

The lawsuit comes as JFL and Schneider Regional Medical Center Chief Executive Officer Darlene Baptiste testified Wednesday before the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance.

During that testimony, Baptiste told lawmakers she was not aware of any wrongful-termination lawsuits pending against the hospitals.

Montoya's complaint is now the second filed in two days alleging that JFL has failed to pay compensation arising from the wrongful termination of a nurse.