

The Virgin Islands Consortium

De Jongh Pledges Support of JFL Hospital

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In the wake of Thursday's announcement that the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS) will cease reimbursement payments to the Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix on Oct. 9, resulting in the hospital's loss of its accredited status, Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. vowed to "continue to press CMS officials to work with the leadership of the Luis Hospital to bring about corrective action."

De Jongh said the news was disheartening, particularly because of the somewhat positive picture Interim Chief Executive Officer Kendall Griffith painted of the hospital's financials in a meeting of district hospital board members earlier this week.

“This decision by CMS is unfortunate as the funds to be terminated are those that provide reimbursement to the hospital for the cost of rendering medical care and services to the elderly who are uninsured,” de Jongh said. “While the CMS decision comes on the heels of a survey team’s visit in late July and is reportedly as a result of the team’s findings, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the Luis Hospital is the only hospital facility serving residents and visitors to St. Croix and we cannot take this decision lightly.”

The Governor said he has had numerous conversations with CMS about the territory’s hospitals and the state of the Virgin Islands’ overall healthcare system. He pointed out CMS had not been “satisfied that certain standards” at the Luis Hospital “were not being met.”

Nonetheless, the Governor remained optimistic after he was briefed of CMS’s decision by Interim CEO Dr. Kendall Griffith and Acting District Board Chairman Dr. Anthony Ricketts late Wednesday evening.

“I am certain that there are feasible solutions that can be identified to stave off this potential health care crisis on St. Croix while working towards addressing the long term objectives outlined by CMS,” de Jongh said.

The Governor pointed out that issues surrounding the territory’s hospitals have always been a priority of his healthcare initiatives, to the degree that he has traveled twice to the CMS Region II headquarters in New York City during the last 18 months to discuss improvement options with officials there. In addition, during the past two months, the Administration has submitted funding proposals to the 30th Legislature aimed at specifically addressing the hospital’s overall financial obligations.

To that end, Governor De Jongh said he would continue to “work with the 30th Legislature to identify whatever additional funding is required to begin the actions necessary to undo the deficiencies cited by CMS.”

A press conference will be held on Friday morning at the hospital. The *VI Consortium* will bring you more as the story develops.