

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Griffith: "It's a New Beginning For JFL"

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Hours after the *VI Consortium* [reported](#) that CMS had decided not to decertify Juan F. Luis Hospital on October 9, a press conference was held on Tuesday to officially announce the good news.

So I am here to tell you that it is truly a new beginning and a fresh start for JFL. We have completely revamped our hospital protocols and procedures, provide routine trainings and staff education to ensure that the clinical and administrative staff are able to provide the highest levels of care.

In the hospital's conference room sat the Delegate to Congress, a representative of Governor de Jongh, Dr. Anthony Ricketts and CEO Dr. Kendall Griffith himself, as well as

Griffith's executive team to hear the announcement.

"Many of you may have heard that last night, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services granted JFL an extension of the termination date for decertification," Griffith said. "This is a short and simple sentence, but let me tell you..it represents an enormous amount of collaboration, diligent effort, and true grit."

As part of the Systems Improvement Agreement entered in between CMS and JFL, the federal agency has abandoned its original termination of services date of Oct. 9 and given the hospital's leadership a six-week extension.

"In order to permit time for adequate consideration by the Governor, the Delegate, the Legislature, the St. Croix District Governing Board and the Hospital, CMS will extend the current Medicare termination date to Nov. 20, 2014, which is a period of 6 weeks," Griffith explained.

"If the proposed Systems Improvement Agreement is not executed by that date, the Hospital's Medicare Provider Agreement will terminate," he continued. "This is therefore our opportunity to work together, to demonstrate to CMS and to St. Croix's and all Virgin Islands citizens, that the Governor, the Delegate, the Legislature and the St. Croix District Governing Board can continue to work together."

If the Luis Hospital is found to be in good standing with CMS by the Nov. 20 extended deadline, the federal agency will grant JFL nine months to rectify its deficiencies, and nearing the end of the nine-month period, CMS will visit the hospital unannounced to check whether it had met its obligation.

"CMS granted this extension because it valued the commitment to quality healthcare that JFL's management team sincerely expressed at our meeting last Friday in Baltimore, Maryland and due to the vision as described in our comprehensive Corrective Action Plan," Griffith said. "The extension was also granted thanks to the reform efforts that were already in place and continuing. CMS knew that we were on the right track and indeed we are."

However, Griffith cautioned that CMS' decision should not be taken lightly, as a lot of work needs to be done to get and keep the hospital in good standing.

"When I originally received word from CMS on September 17, 2014 to advise that JFL would face de-certification on October 9, 2014, I knew that I had to quickly take action and prove to CMS and to the Virgin Islands community that although we had made some errors in the past, we were on track for better days at JFL," he added.

Griffith said the notice of decertification prompted JFL to "redouble" its efforts to "make the necessary changes to ensure the highest standards of quality patient care," and thanked the Delegate to Congress, Governor de Jongh and Senators of the 30th Legislature, and others for their support.

We turned things around at JFL.

Recounting last Friday's trip to Baltimore to plead JFL's case before CMS officials, Griffith added, "We showed CMS that our reform and improvement measures were making a

difference and that we had already made great strides in improving the standardization of quality patient care at JFL. This is indeed very good news."

The loss of the hospital's certification would affect all who live in the territory, specifically St. Croix residents, Griffith pointed out. With this in mind, the doctor said, residents should unite, adding that it was a "new beginning" for JFL.

"The CMS survey highlighted a possible loss of care for all Medicare beneficiaries who come through JFL's doors," he said. "The entire territory would have been adversely affected. CMS is clear in that we all have to work together. Indeed, we are all in this together."

He continued, "So, I am here to tell you that it is truly a new beginning and a fresh start for JFL. We have completely revamped our hospital protocols and procedures, provide routine trainings and staff education to ensure that the clinical and administrative staff are able to provide the highest levels of care. And we truly feel pride as a staff in being acknowledged by CMS as having made wide-sweeping changes and for taking corrective actions that prove our sustainability in providing standards of excellence and improved medical, fiscal and governing management."

Griffith told *VI Consortium* that the hospital requested \$10 million from the 30th Legislature in order to get on the fast track to recovery; however, he said more funding would be needed for other improvements and sustainability. The doctor also said the hospital's relationship with law firm Ropes and Gray, the Boston-based group aiding the hospital in its turnaround efforts, would remain in place. However, when asked how much it was costing tax payers to keep the relationship, Griffith said the budgeted amount for the law firm's services is \$175,000, but noted he had not received an invoice from the firm to-date.

In closing, Griffith said: "Although we celebrate today...today we resume the hard work and dedicated efforts that have begun in earnest to improve JFL and the quality of care we provide to our patients. We at JFL commit."