

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$10 Million Needed To Avert JFL CMS Decertification Not Yet Identified

Health / **Published On January 28, 2015 10:33 AM /**

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Governor Kenneth Mapp revealed during his first State of the Territory Address on Monday night that the Virgin Islands Government had not yet identified the \$10 million St. Croix's Juan F. Luis Hospital (JFL) management [said it needs to get on the road](#) to recovery following a mandate by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that the hospital get its house in order or face decertification. JFL first requested the funding months ago from the 30th Legislature.

Mapp made this known when detailing the dire financial state of the territory, describing the situation as "critical" and "on the brink of collapse." He said the dismal financial situation was the result of a government facing a budget deficit of \$91.2 million, while

owing tens of millions more in other obligations, and is weighed down even further by a total debt of \$2.4 billion.

These other obligations, according to the governor, is in excess of \$176 million, which includes the \$10 million requested by JFL.

"This [budget] shortfall also does not include the \$10.3 million due to the Juan F. Luis Hospital, as part of the System Improvement Agreement with CMS," Mapp said.

While the governor vowed to work with the 31st Legislature to find the best way to identify the funds JFL says it needs to maintain its CMS certification, it is still unknown where those funds would come from.

On Oct. 8, 2014, JFL CEO Kendall Griffith hosted a press conference to announce that CMS had held off its decision to decertify the hospital due to a host of violations officials found in its most recent audit of the hospital. A group representing JFL had visited CMS's Baltimore offices to plead on the hospital's behalf. The delay of decertification would only be made long-term if JFL followed measures outlined in a Systems Improvement Agreement entered into by JFL and CMS.

"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 at the October press conference. "This is a short and simple sentence, but let me tell you, it represents an enormous amount of collaboration, diligent effort, and true grit."

He continued, "When I originally received word from CMS on September 17, 2014 to advise that JFL would face decertification 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."

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.

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."

"So, I am here to tell you that it is truly a new beginning and a fresh start for JFL," JFL continued. "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."

While Griffith told *VI Consortium* in October that the hospital would initial request \$10 million from the government, he said more funding would be needed for other improvements and sustainability.

"Although we celebrate today, Griffith said in October, "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."

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