

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Approves \$7 Million For JFL, Warns Of Gov't Inability To Fund Hospitals' 'Inefficiencies'

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Governor Kenneth Mapp has approved section 8 of Bill No. 31-0062, which appropriates \$7 million to the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital (JFL) to fund the implementation of the System Improvement Agreement (SIA) with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Hospital officials have long been making their case for the money, which they say is an indelible part of passing CMS's inspections, expected to take place in August.

At a [press conference](#) held at the hospital's Cardiac Center on St. Croix, JFL CEO Dr. Kendall Griffith said the hospital had made "great strides" and "continues to improve"

since the SIA was made effective over three months ago. He said JFL has "heard CMS" and had initiated staff training in various areas, in addition to making key staff appointments. Griffith did not specify, however, how many of the tasks had been completed or how much of the funding the hospital had received to complete those tasks.

JFL has until August to become compliant with training, staffing, the appointment of an independent expert, and other requirements outlined in the SIA or risk CMS decertification.

The governor also approved sections 9 and 10 of the same bill, which mandates that a separate account be maintained to segregate the funds appropriated in section 8; and appropriates \$3,425,957 to the Roy Lester Schneider Regional Medical Center, respectively.

Yet, even as he approved measures making available funds to keep the territory's hospitals afloat, the governor said the practice of continuously funding the facilities' "inefficiencies" cannot continue.

"I met with the governing boards, chief executive officers and executive staff of our hospitals and have advised them that the central government cannot continue to subsidize their inefficiencies and poor management practices," Mapp said.

The combined \$10,425,957 pushes the territory's fiscal year operating budget deficit to \$144 million.

In other action, the governor vetoed section 2 of Bill No. 31-0062(1), described as part of the territory's Hospitals and Medical Center Rescue Act.

"I believe that this is simply bad public policy and quite frankly, illegal," Mapp said.

"Singling out certain medical specialists or codified employees for removal from the definition of a public employee, as defined by title 24 Virgin Islands' Code, chapter 14, section 362 subsection (g), to pay them higher salaries than similarly situated employees will have a discriminatory effect on those physicians or employees not listed. "

To exemplify his frustration with the request, the governor asked: "Should we adopt this policy to recruit off-island police officers or teachers?"

Mapp also vetoed section 7 of Bill No. 31-0062(1), which sought to particularly list radiologists to practice telemedicine in the Virgin Islands, calling the amendment "redundant."

Mapp stated that the law, as it is currently constructed, allows the Board of Medical examiners "to authorize certain physicians" to practice telemedicine in the Virgin Islands (3 V.I.C. §45d). Therefore, to specifically list radiologists when they are not excluded seems unnecessary and may appear to grant radiologists some extra edge over other physicians.

[\[Bill No. 31-0062\]](#)

Feature Image: Juan F. Luis Hospital & Medical Center courtyard

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