

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After Pictures Of Moldy School Lunch Bread And Cheese Surface, Sen. Jean Forde Takes Action

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Sen. Jean Forde eats with students of Gomez School

ST. THOMAS -- After expressing concern with the territory's school lunch program, Sen. Jean Forde on Wednesday met with the St. Thomas/St. John Insular Superintendent Dionne Wells, Deputy School Lunch Director Ms. Esther Lynch-Izaak and two local certified executive chefs regarding the quality of meals served to students and to come up with possible solutions to rectify any shortcomings.

The senator's urgency came about after pictures of what appeared to be [moldy bread](#), and another showing a bland-looking [bread and cheese with sliced carrots](#) from local schools surfaced on the internet.

"I was so disgusted that I immediately reached out to the Insular Superintendent of Schools and the Director of the school lunch program to demand an explanation," Forde said in a press release issued on Monday.

"Our children deserve better. This is an abomination. Why are we being treated like second-class citizens? We must address this school lunch program, which has been a problem for too long. The food is unsightly, unpalatable and non-nutritional," the senator added.

Following his meeting with the aforementioned parties, however, and after touring the Gomez school cafeteria, the senator said he was encouraged by the experience.

"After I publicly expressed my concerns about the school lunch program, Chef Larry L. Nibbs reached out to me and offered his assistance," Senator Forde said.

"At the meeting with Wells and Lynch-Izaak yesterday, we discussed methods of preparing and cooking the food with a concentration on quality and presentation, and the Joseph Gomez Elementary School was identified as the site of an initial pilot project.

"Consequently, both chefs showed up this morning and worked closely with the regular ideas."



Sen. Jean Forde eats with students of Joseph

Gomez Elementary School

Senator Forde, who ate lunch with the Joseph Gomez Elementary School students today, said the project was most successful, and provided an opportunity for the kitchen staff to learn different techniques while exposing the children to a different culinary experience. One child, he said, was heard describing the spinach served as "thumbs up", and another described the chicken fingers as "crunchy but juicy"

A hearing on the matter has been scheduled for June 18, where Forde, who chairs the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, will hear testimony from the parties responsible for the territory's school lunch program.