

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Vetoes Temporary Licensure Measure; Says It Reduces Standards Of Medical Practice In Territory

Health / **Published On August 02, 2016 08:53 AM /**

Staff **August 02, 2016**



Governor Kenneth Mapp has vetoed Bill No. 31-0324, an act attempting to amend Title 27 of the Virgin Islands Code, relating to the licensure of physicians and expanding the conditions under which the Virgin Islands Board of Medical Examiners may issue temporary and special licenses to practice medicine in the Virgin Islands, Government House announced Monday.

In his transmittal letter to Senate President Neville James, the governor stated, "I truly believe that all of us want to maintain a high quality health care system in the Virgin Islands and we will accept nothing less. Bill No. 31-0324 is a bad bill, bad public policy, and does not contribute anything towards a high quality health care system."

Mr. Mapp's veto of Bill 31-0324 seeks to maintain a standard of care that the governor has championed since his early days in government, Government House says.

Citing a similar bill during his service as a senator in the 20th Legislature, the governor recounted, "We had this same debate and we decided then that we would not permit persons to practice medicine in the Virgin Islands via legislative fiat. Persons wishing to practice medicine on any of us must simply meet and pass the testing requirements to obtain a license to practice medicine.

"In addition, we agreed then that it would harm the people of the Virgin Islands to grant permanent medical licenses through an administrative process to persons who graduated from non-accredited foreign medical schools, and who could not pass the testing requirements to obtain a license to practice medicine. The bill before me seeks to do what we rejected in 1994, and we must reject it again in 2016." The Governor has made clear his position that, "To practice medicine as a physician in the Virgin Islands, all persons must meet the high standards that currently exist in Virgin Islands Law."

The release says Mr. Mapp acknowledged that provisions do exist for persons graduating from non-accredited medical schools to work in Virgin Island hospitals; however, not as full-fledged licensed physicians. Such individuals cannot write an order for medication within the hospital or write prescriptions for patients, and they must work under the supervision of a fully licensed physician, he said. This position is similar to the duties of a Physician's Assistant (a person trained to perform under the supervision of a physician; persons able to perform many clinical procedures traditionally performed by a physician, such as diagnosing and treating minor ailments).

The governor, in vetoing Bill No. 31-0324, examined the proposed language changes and deemed them unacceptable and a cause for concern for any person seeking treatment in the Virgin Islands, according to Government House. In section 1 (c), this measure states, "There is no limitation on the number of times that a temporary license may be renewed." In addition, the measure removes the qualifying clause for temporary licensure, "have graduated from a qualified school of medicine, have at least one year of internship and meet other qualifications" and replaces this language with; "has passed the Educational Commission of Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), is a foreign medical graduate and has not passed the local professional examination and does not have one year of internship in a hospital recognized by the American Medical Association". The governor reasoned that this would be the new lower standard to receive an unlimited temporary license to practice medicine on the people of the Virgin Islands if this measure becomes law.

In his letter, he then asks the senators, "Which one of you would accept such a practitioner of medicine to attend to you or one of your family members in a critical time of a medical emergency? Which one of you would go to such a licensed physician for medical care? Which health insurance carrier would acknowledge such a licensed physician and pay for medical services under a current health insurance contract? Which one of you would attest that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services would acknowledge and pay for medical services of Virgin Islanders provided by an unsupervised, unlimited temporary medical licensee?" Putting family members, reimbursements and standards of care at risk is not the progressive model for health care that the current administration ascribes to, therefore the governor has vetoed the bill

stating, "My friends: This is just a bad bill," according to the release.

In his closing comments, the Governor emphasized, "If a person graduates from a medical school, foreign or domestic, and cannot meet and pass the testing criteria for permanent licensure as established across our great nation, then they should not be granted a license, temporary or otherwise, to practice medicine in the Virgin Islands. It is our first job to protect the people of this territory and this bill does not do that."

© Viconsortium 2026