

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sen. Roach Says Human Services Should Return Patients To Sea View Pending Proper Relocation Plan

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ST. THOMAS -- Senator Tregenza Roach today voiced his concerns that the Queen Louise Home for the Aged is inadequate to meet the needs of elderly residents hastily transferred there from the Sea View Nursing & Rehabilitation Facility earlier this week.

Mr. Roach's frustration with the matter, made known via press release, comes on the heels of news that Department of Human Services (D.H.S.) Commissioner-Designee, Anita Roberts, had allegedly misread [a letter](#) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), Office of Residential Care Facilities, which asked for the Government of the Virgin Islands's plan for action relative to relocating the patients, and not their immediate removal.

But Government House Communications Director, Cherie Munchez, told this publication on Thursday night that Ms. Roberts did not misread the letter, instead, the fledgling commissioner-designee made the decision to move the residents -- a process that is to continue in the coming days and weeks, Ms. Munchez said -- based solely on assuring their safety.

Mr. Roach urged D.H.S. to return the residents removed from Sea View and now being housed at the Queen Louise Home for the Aged just as those removed and taken to the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital were returned to Sea View earlier today.

"I am especially aware of the conditions at Queen Louise after having successfully ushered through the Legislature a measure to provide \$100,000.00 to meet the critical needs of residents there," Mr. Roach said.

According to the release, when Queen Louise Home administrators testified at the Legislature in support of the measure, Mr. Roach said they indicated many needs at the facility, among them a fire alarm system, electrical repairs, a commercial washing machine, a water heater for the laundry, lack of transportation, and many other items.

"I could hardly imagine that they are in any better condition to house these fragile, elderly residents than Sea View, presently is," he said. Mr. Roach made his comments after visiting Sea View earlier today, meeting with administrators and staff there, touring the facilities, and reviewing documents exchanged between the Government of the Virgin Islands and H.U.D., which holds a mortgage on the Sea View property.

"It is clear from the correspondence," the senator continued, "that all H.U.D. was seeking was the government's plan for relocation for the residents be provided to H.U.D. 'within 24 hours of receipt of this letter,' and not an immediate evacuation."

During his visit to Sea View, Mr. Roach said he had also been informed that the Department of Health had conducted an unannounced "Food Service Establishment Inspection" earlier in the day, and that he had been provided a copy of D.O.H.'s report on its findings, which gave Sea View a passing score of 80 out of 100.

Mr. Roach said he was horrified at the description provided Sea View by staff of the manner in which the elderly residents had been picked up and removed from the place where some have lived for as long as 22 years. He observed that the dedicated staff at Sea View were concerned that residents did not even get to take personal effects and that a communication board critical to allowing a resident to express herself was left behind.

"We can make this better, by returning all the residents back to their familiar surroundings while we all come together and address the required plan for their future care," the senator concluded.

Feature Image: Ambulances at Sea View Nursing Home on Monday evening, busing patients out of the beleaguered facility.