The Virgin Islands Consortium

CMS Gives Juan F. Luis Hospital Until Dec. 9 To Correct Deficiencies Or Face Decertification

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ST. CROIX -- Just over two years following the decertification of the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, C.M.S. has threatened to decertify the hospital following a recent visit, issuing a notice of termination to the medical facility and giving it until December 9 to come into compliance through the submission of an acceptable plan of correction and subsequent verification by the State Survey Agency, Government House announced late Wednesday.

If J.F.L. does not come into compliance by the aforementioned date, C.M.S. will cease to make Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, a move that could be catastrophic for the hospital and the wider St. Croix economy. According to Government House, the C.M.S.

letter to J.F.L cited "significant deficiencies" at the hospital.

On September 19, 2014, J.F.L. announced that it had lost its accreditation status. Back then, decertification was attributed to multiple problems; most pointedly, however, was the facility's budget being halved from about $33 million in 2008 to about $17 million in 2014. The budget cuts had forced J.F.L. to cut back in key departments, producing a chain reaction leading to the lack of staff to perform critical tasks, nursing deficiencies and other problems.

In a letter to the Senate President Neville James on Wednesday, Governor Kenneth Mapp asked that the Senate move swiftly on his $260 million capital projects measure, and asked that lawmakers increase the line item for hospital repairs from $10 million to $20 million. In November, the governor signed into law a $247 million working capital bill, $147 million of which was to be used for government operations, including $25 million for the territory's hospitals.

The approval would mean floating more bonds for a government already laden with debt and suffering with a junk status credit rating -- which makes interest rates higher.

“In light of the deadline to avert termination set by CMS, I urge the members of the 31st Legislature to act on my capital projects plan and to favorably consider my request to increase the line item amount to our hospitals from $10,000,000 to an amount not to exceed $20,000,000," wrote Mr. Mapp. "I know there is no need for me to explain the catastrophic result of any of our hospitals losing their certification by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.”