

The Virgin Islands Consortium

School Lunch Program On St. Croix In Disarray, Hansen Letter To Education Commish Reveals

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ST. CROIX -- The School Lunch Program on this island appears to be badly disorganized, a letter Senator Alicia Hansen wrote to Dept. of Education Commissioner Sharon McCollum has revealed. The senator said she was recently contacted by multiple sources who informed her that the government's warehouse for food supplies was just about empty.

"Further, it is my understanding that one of your major food suppliers decided not to deliver anymore goods to feed the students, due to a lack of payment," Mrs. Hansen wrote.

Just this afternoon, multiple irate students sent in a [picture](#) showing what they were being fed at the St. Central High School; a chicken leg with a pack of chips. Yesterday, according to students, the school served veggie nuggets to the vegetarian students.

"This is what students at Central High are supposed to eat? Knowing exams are coming up, this is what we are being given to sustain our bodies during school?" wrote one student in a message to The Consortium today. "This is sick and disrespectful."

In her letter to the commissioner, Mrs. Hansen reminded that the school lunch program is the only balanced meal that some students have access to, and urged D.O.E. to do all in its power to assure its continued availability.

"Another concern is the sterilization or lack thereof, at many of our public school kitchens which are not conducive to the protection of our children from exposure to disease," Mrs. Hansen continued. "As you are aware, to kill bacteria, dishes should not be washed by hand at room temperature, but instead in water set at a hot enough temperature to kill bacteria. In addition to all this, there is also a need for dish liquid to safeguard students and kitchen staff from any epidemic that can be preventable."

The letter added that employees have resorted to purchasing kitchen supplies with their own funds. "Though we all appreciate their willingness to step up where the government has fallen short, this is unfair to those employees, especially on the salaries that they currently receive," Mrs. Hansen said.

The senator said she was deeply disturbed by these conditions, and what she described as "the abuse that the school lunch workers continue to endure as they are forced to work in an unsafe environment while students continue to be exposed to bacteria at a location that the government ensures every parent, time and time again, is safe for children."

Mrs. Hansen requested an update on the matter, and said she was ready to help where possible.