

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Good News For Territory, An Additional 19,000 Virgin Islanders Now Eligible For Medicaid

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ST. THOMAS -- An additional 19,000 Virgin Islands residents are now eligible for healthcare and prescription drug coverage under the federal Medicaid program, following the Mapp/Potter administration's success in getting the federal government to approve an increase to the federal poverty level in the territory, Governor Kenneth Mapp announced Friday during a Government House press conference.

During his talk at the press event, Mr. Mapp explained that the adjustment will amount to an additional \$18 million in federal reimbursements for healthcare, provided to those among the uninsured population at or below the poverty level -- which has been increased from \$6,500 to \$11,770.

The local government will now be reimbursed 55 percent to 100 percent of the cost of medical services provided to an adjusted total of 31,000 residents. If the requested increase in the official poverty level had not been approved by the federal government, the local government would have remained responsible for 100 percent of the cost of treating 19,000 individuals previously ineligible, according to Government House.

Mr. Mapp has asked the Legislature to approve the additional \$10 million he has requested to meet the local government's required match, [which the Legislature had rejected](#) during a Thursday Committee on Finance hearing. The amount needed to meet the 45 percent local match requirement, he pointed out, is far less than what it costs to he said.



D.H.S. Commissioner Felecia Blyden and

Governor Mapp at Government House on Friday.

In justifying his request for the \$10 million appropriation, the governor stated, "The Medical Assistance Program is geared towards helping the most vulnerable in our community."

Even those who are able to see a doctor often cannot afford the prescribed medication, he noted. "They get sick, they deteriorate and, ultimately, they do not survive", Mr. Mapp said. He said the additional funding for from the federal government would also benefit the territory's hospitals.

The governor said he was prepared to go to the Legislature himself, allow lawmakers to question him with the hope that, in the end, they would approve the measure and forward it to his desk for his signature.

"In my kindness tone and my most cooperative tone, I am open, prepared, ready to sit down with the members of the Legislature, roll up my sleeves," the governor said. "I am prepared to sit with the members of the Legislature and let all 15 chew me out; do whatever and say whatever things their good hearts want to say, and when we're finished with that, roll up our sleeves and come up with a solution to these problems for the people of the Virgin Islands."

Mr. Mapp and Department of Human Services Commissioner, Felecia Blyden, said that D.H.S. personnel will begin identifying eligible clients when they require medical or other federally subsidized services, such as SNAP, so that they can be enrolled in the expanded Medical Assistance Program.

This development is expected to greatly improve cash flow at the two local hospitals, which often require cash infusions from the central government because of the amount of

uncompensated care provided, according to Government House.

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