

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill To Create Registry For Elderly Moves Forward

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ST. THOMAS -- Bill No. 32-0064, which seeks to create a registry of the elderly and people with disabilities living alone, was approved in the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services on Tuesday, and will now move to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further vetting.

Senator Dwayne DeGraff, who sponsored the measure, said the bill "is significant in assisting persons to receive the necessary assistance as a result of a natural disaster."

The measure includes keeping the data collected for registry confidential, with disclosure of personal information only being made available to assist the patient during a natural disaster or other medical emergency. If unlawfully disclosed, perpetrators could be fined

up to \$500 and/or imprisoned for one year. According to language found in the bill, the data is to be maintained for persons 60 years and older who live alone, and also persons with disabilities who live alone.

“Implementation of a more comprehensive registry would provide an opportunity for emergency response agencies to obtain information through the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management to facilitate better planning of critical services that these individuals need during natural disasters or other emergencies,” said Ana Valez-Martinez, director of Herbert Grigg Home for the Elderly. Mrs. Valez-Martinez noted that while many registries exist throughout the government, not one could be accessed territory-wide.

As for cost, Mrs. Valez-Martinez said \$15,000 would be needed for implementation and monitoring, and additional funds to hire full-time employees.

If approved in the Rules and Judiciary committee, the measure will then be forwarded to the full body for a final vote before heading to Governor Kenneth Mapp.