

The Virgin Islands Consortium

FEMA Approves \$80 Million Request To Fund Replacement Of JFL Hospital On St. Croix

Health / **Published On May 24, 2019 10:39 PM /**

Staff **May 24, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- Governor Albert Bryan Jr. on Tuesday announced the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) would cover the cost of replacing the Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital (JFL) on St. Croix after it sustained severe damage during hurricane Maria in September 2017.

The announcement was first made by Mr. Bryan during his interview with The Consortium's Ernice Gilbert this afternoon, where he also announced the funding to be \$80 million.

FEMA has reviewed the proposed replacement of Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and found the actual replacement cost is eligible, as the estimated repair cost exceeds 50 percent of the estimated replacement cost. The move to have FEMA fund the cost of replacing the hospital began under the Mapp administration following the devastating storms of 2017.

According to Government House, Mr. Bryan welcomed the news and thanked FEMA for its continued support to the territory in the post-hurricane rebuilding effort.

Prior to Friday's announcement it was uncertain whether the federal government would cover the cost to replace the hospital or fund repairs to the structure, Government House said.

"This announcement is welcomed news for the residents of St. Croix and also the hardworking men and women of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital," said the territory's leader. "JFL is a critical part of our territory's healthcare system, and we are working to ensure we rebuild it to meet the healthcare needs of our residents. We now have an opportunity to build a facility that is more comfortable for the staff and patients, more energy efficient and resilient enough to withstand the rigors of our changing climate."

The governor said, however, while the replacement of JFL is "a step in the right direction, a new structure will not solve the longstanding issues challenging the territory's ability to provide quality affordable healthcare to its residents."

While in Washington recently, [Mr. Bryan spoke to some of those issues](#), namely the disparities with Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to the territory in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Feb. 26.

"Healthcare funding in the Virgin Islands was under great stress even before the two hurricanes. Under Medicaid, the arbitrarily low FMAP rate and the correspondingly high local matching requirement have imposed severe and unsustainable financial demands on the territory," he said.

The governor said Tuesday that "ensuring access to quality affordable healthcare is one of our administration's key priorities," and that "the administration will aggressively continue working with our federal partners in the recovery and rebuilding effort on behalf of the people of the territory."

The Government of the Virgin Islands will undertake the project in collaboration with the Juan F. Luis Hospital, according to the release. FEMA and the GVI are currently developing a fixed cost estimate for the succeeding medical facility.

JFL will continue to utilize the modular units already installed on site to treat patients on St. Croix while the new structure is erected.