

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Public Sector Workers on Covid-19 Frontlines Now Eligible for Paid Leave

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Staff Consortium **September 03, 2020**



Many of the territory's public sector healthcare workers and first responders are now eligible for additional time off under the COVID Leave Act signed into law on August 11, the Office of Senator Kenneth Gittens has announced.

Act 8327, sponsored by Senator Kenneth Gittens, took effect immediately and creates an avenue for these frontline employees to be granted special administrative leave of up to 80 hours rather than have to use their accrued sick or annual leave if they become ill or must quarantine during this pandemic. The employees eligible for this paid leave include nurses, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, social workers, corrections staff, law enforcement officers and their support staff.

Mr. Gittens, who himself has been home recovering from COVID-19, has written to the territory's agency heads to ensure that they and their employees are fully aware of the provisions of the COVID Leave Act.

"I continue to hear that employees are using their personal time or even going without pay and this should not be the case," he said. "These essential workers are risking their own health everyday and that is why we moved this important legislation. I would like to thank all of these individuals for their effort and sacrifice during this most challenging period."

Mr. Gittens explained the provisions of the bill in his letter to agency heads and included a copy of the legislation for their reference. He urged any employees who believe they may be eligible to contact their Human Resources division before tapping into their personal leave in the event of exposure to coronavirus, according to the release.

"This is a very serious illness and we must do all we can to support those who are supporting us through this pandemic," the senator said. "I personally feel blessed that I have been able to manage my own illness at home, thus far, and I would like to once again thank the people of the Virgin Islands for their prayers and many well wishes."