

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DeGazon Working With B.O.C. To Use Inmates For School Repairs

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Eulalie Rivera Elementary School.

With the start of the 2019-2020 school year around the corner, Sen. Allison DeGazon said recently she is pushing for the Department of Education to work in conjunction with the Bureau of Corrections (B.O.C.) to expedite school summer maintenance.

Ms. DeGazon said B.O.C. for years has used certain nonviolent inmates who can work for projects throughout the territory as part of its Inmate Work Program. In April, Gov. Albert Bryan announced that inmates have also begun a cleanup and beautification

program in association with the VI Waste Management Authority.

Starting in St. Croix, the inmates are collecting trash from the roadside and public areas to beautify the islands and improve the quality of life for Virgin Islanders.

Ms. DeGazon said she reached out to B.O.C. to ask whether the inmates would take part in summer maintenance this year for the territory's schools.

Riel Faulkner, assistant director for administration for B.O.C., said it would be on an as-needed basis.

"The Bureau of Corrections' Inmate Work Program has been working -- and will continue to work -- with the Department of Education to provide maintenance and repairs to the territory's public schools on an as-needed basis in preparation for the upcoming school year," Mr. Faulkner said. "Once D.O.E. identifies maintenance projects that can be served by the work program, they contact the Bureau, which makes the necessary arrangements to have inmates perform the tasks under the supervision of correctional officers."

Following the response from B.O.C., Ms. DeGazon said she contacted D.O.E. Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin to ask what their needs were for maintenance and if the schools were on schedule to be ready for the upcoming school year.

"If not, are you utilizing or planning to utilize the inmates on both districts to help in this area? I believe this will help with cost and turnaround time to ensure our facilities are ready for our children, teachers and support staff," the senator said. "If this is not in place, I am calling for a coordinated effort between B.O.C. and DOE to ensure schools are ready."

The Dept. of Education will host a press conference Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. in St. Thomas on the steps of the Charlotte Amalie High School, to address changes in the upcoming 2019-2020 school year, as well as issues with the C.A.H.S. facility.