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## FEMA Releases First \$10.5 Million for Juan F. Luis Hospital Rebuild

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ST. CROIX — The Federal Emergency Management Agency has released \$10.5 million to the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center to begin the rebuild process. The funds come some two years following Hurricane Maria's devastation to St. Croix. The \$10.5 million is part of \$80 million that FEMA has approved to replace the hospital.

Governor Albert Bryan, in [announcing the \\$80 million approval back in May](#), said the announcement was "welcomed news for the residents of St. Croix and also the hardworking men and women of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital."

"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,” Mr. Bryan said.

The \$10.5 million release was announced by Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett on Wednesday. She said the funds will be used for an architect-engineering (A&E) firm to conduct facility master planning studies and prepare design phase documents. "This grant provides funds to Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital to hire an architect & engineering firm to conduct USVI hospital and medical facility master planning studies and to also prepare design phase documents. This project will only encompass the master planning and design phase services for Juan Luis Hospital," said Ms. Plaskett.

Mr. Bryan has hailed the impending new hospital as a major step forward for healthcare in the territory. However, he said 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 earlier this year, 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 that “ensuring access to quality affordable healthcare is one our administration’s key priorities,” and a 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 Government House.

FEMA and the GVI have been 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.