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Carrion Calls for Pause of Oil Refining at Limetree Bay, Emergency Hearing to Address Foul Odor Impacting West of St. Croix

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Limetree Bay Terminals should pause refining operations until it can adequately prevent further emissions and install appropriate air quality monitoring systems, Senator Samuel Carrión said Friday.

The St. Croix senator also requested that Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory convene an emergency meeting of the Committee of the Whole to address residents' concerns and better inform the public of steps being taken to address any emissions from the refinery.

“While I applaud Limetree’s planned reinstatement of the air monitoring program, we can’t expect the people of St. Croix to live with the threat of contaminated air and water - public health must be

prioritized,” Mr. Carrión said. “We must acknowledge that there will be incidents at Limetree from time to time, but those incidents must be extremely isolated. Nothing has boosted St. Croix’s economy more than the oil storage terminals and the refinery; however, nothing is more important than the health and well-being of our people.”

The senator agreed that the governor’s activation of the territory’s Joint Command Center to address concerns related to Limetree was appropriate under the circumstances, but that more must be done to protect residents in the short term.

Limetree was served with a notice of violation by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on April 30, 2021 for sulfur dioxide emissions and further action by the EPA is possible.

“It’s a real problem when our children can’t even attend classes,” Senator Carrión said. “These students have missed so much school already. School closures at this stage are simply unacceptable. I remain very concerned about all of the residents downwind from the refinery, as many of them are also periodically impacted by refineries and landfills.”

Mr. Carrión said he would be following up with Limetree regarding timelines for reinstating air monitoring equipment. He has also requested that the 34th Legislature hold a Committee of the Whole meeting to hear from Limetree, medical experts, and impacted residents.

“We need more information, but at this point, the prudent thing to do is to pause refining operations at least until the air monitoring equipment is operational,” he said.

Ms. Frett-Gregory told the Consortium she agreed that Limetree Bay should provide answers to the community, but even before a hearing is called, she said Limetree Bay should hold an immediate press conference to address St. Croix residents directly, stating that the company must be forthcoming with information and make plain what is really going on.

"The focus needs to be on Limetree coming out and having an earnest conversation with the St. Croix community — not by no press release, but they need to have a press conference, so that's my expectation," she said.