

The Virgin Islands Consortium

J.F.L to Work With Senate to Come Up With Solution for Bureau of Corrections \$5.2 Million Debt

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It was revealed during the testimony of Dyma Williams, Interim C.E.O. of the Juan F. Luis Hospital, on Wednesday that the hospital is owed \$12.1 million from government agencies, with the largest balance belonging to the Bureau of Corrections- which owes J.F.L \$5.2 million. This discovery led senators to seek answers and solutions.

Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory was shocked to see that the Bureau of Corrections debt to J.F.L increased by \$3 million in one year and her statement on the topic began the conversation on how the issues can be resolved. She said "I have to go

back to this issue with the Bureau of Corrections and this outstanding amount, I looked at the year of May 2020 and our current year of 2021 and we are seeing a \$3 Million increase as far as this outstanding debt.”

She was confused how there could be such an increase in debt and wanted to know how it was possible with the Medicaid system in place. “I am trying to wrap my head around why we would have such a significant increase in this category when we have the Medicaid program... Help me understand how we can see such a significant increase of an outstanding debt over a year when we have the Medicaid program and I am certain that most of these inmates qualify. Something is not jiving here, if you need to look further into it that's fine but it's troubling me.”

J.F.L's Acting Chief Financial Officer Shenel Moorehead responded, “I will continue to look into this. That's one of our key priorities for the next fiscal year. I did want to clarify too that we don't bill the individuals, we bill the facility itself. We are trying to work with the facilities to make sure that they are getting all the necessary coverage that they can.”

Ms. Frett-Gregory stressed that the matter needs to be resolved “This needs to be addressed, I can't imagine that we have a mountain bill of \$5.2 million with the increase of our medicaid program here in the Virgin Islands, it just doest sit well and I am certain that the majority of our inmates qualify for this program that's something we expect to see improvement on.

After this discussion Senator and Committee Chairmen, Kurt Vialet, immediately opened a line of communication with the Bureau of Correction to learn more from their perspective, “I just instructed my staff to send a letter to Bureau of Corrections to find out whether or not the inmates are applying for that presumptive eligibility” he said before calling called for a recess.

When they returned he stayed committed to find a solution to this issue, “We did have a discussion about the presumptive eligibility and Bureau of Corrections and Senator (Novelle) Francis as chair of the Committee of Health and Hospitals will be holding a meeting with Director (Wynn timer) Testmark, Commissioner (Kimberly) Casuey (Gomez) , Ms. Moorehead so we can align that entire process and we hope that it will result in a mass registration of those individuals that are in Bureau of Corrections for Medicaid. I think we need to discuss all avenues that we can increase the collections for the hospital so that we are going to look into the possibility of making that work.”

In her closing statement of the hearing Ms. Williams thanked the 34th Legislature for thier efforts on moving this issue forward “Today already, you Senator Vialet and your Senate

colleagues have demonstrated leadership by ensuring external agencies address their debt to J.F.L, we thank you and stand ready to implement.”

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