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Bryan Administration to Introduce Nurse Retention Plan; JFL Said to be Experiencing Severe Staff Shortage

Health / **Published On October 04, 2021 09:22 AM /**

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital's logo. By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

The Bryan administration will soon announce a nurse retention program aimed at encouraging current nurses to remain employed at the territory's hospitals while attracting others.

During an interview with the Consortium Friday, Governor Albert Bryan said nurses would receive a \$2,000 annual bonus for two years "plus some increases on their pay," among other incentives that will be announced as part of the plan.

"I'm about to release funds to give nurses at both hospitals retention bonuses; we're going to launch a whole new program to attract full-time nurses to the hospitals," Mr. Bryan added.

Nurses were always needed at the territory's hospitals, but the situation has become desperate at one of the two following a vaccine mandate imposed by the territorial hospital board. According to a person with intimate knowledge of the situation, the Juan F. Luis Hospital will lose at least 15 nurses by year's end, around 10 of whom have already left. Among them is a young nurse considered to be a rising star and one of the charge nurses of JFL's medical-surgical unit. She was accepted as a travel nurse in Florida with a salary much higher than her former employer's offering. Other JFL nurses are expected to pursue travel nurse opportunities as well.

"Right now JFL is going through it," said Governor Bryan. "Every single day we're looking for new ways to help them." According to a JFL schedule examined by the Consortium, the hospital's Critical Care Unit has a shortage of 9 nurses from Oct. 3 through the 9th.

Many nurses who traveled to the territory recently to work as part of an agreement with Pafford Medical Services have been leaving after a short time, and it was unclear for how long the government would be able to fund the costly program which sees the Pafford traveling nurses making \$20,000 a month — and that's after Pafford takes its percentage.

JFL is said to have accepted almost all of the religious exemptions requested by nurses who are not vaccinated against Covid-19, though it was not clear how long these exemption would last.

Both the Juan F. Luis Hospital and the Schneider Regional Medical Center are in the midst of major changes, with both facilities set to receive new CEOs soon. The Consortium reported in September that JFL CEO Dyma Williams and SRMC CEO Dr. Luis Amaro would be replaced, reports that have since been confirmed by the territorial hospital board. Dr. Amaro [announced his resignation on Sept. 23](#).