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## Bryan on Hospitals' CEO Matter: I Wanted Dyma Williams, Dr. Luis Amaro to Remain in Charge

Health / **Published On October 18, 2021 07:33 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **October 18, 2021**

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**Dyma Williams** By. VI LEGISLATURE

Governor Albert Bryan has said his choices for chief executive officer for the Juan F. Luis Hospital and the Schneider Regional Medical Center were Dyma Williams and Dr. Luis Amaro respectively, telling the Consortium during a Sunday interview that while the territorial and district hospital boards through their law-given autonomy make independent decisions, he believes Ms. Williams and Dr. Amaro, though not perfect, served at a time when the hospitals were under historic pressures, and that yanking them from those positions did not sit right with him.

Mr. Bryan's comments, as the chief executive of the U.S. Virgin Islands, has the power to indirectly sway decisions. While Ms. Williams [has been told of her fate](#), she is expected to be at the hospital until the end of October, and the situation could still change.

Dr. Amaro has already resigned. [In a statement](#) announcing his resignation, he said, "After learning from the board of directors that I am no longer a candidate for the permanent CEO position, I spent some time reflecting on my future. It is with a measure of sadness and excitement to tell you that I will be returning my focus full-time to my private practice after ensuring a smooth transition to new executive leadership.

Ms. Williams has not spoken publicly on the matter.

"Dyma is my pick," Mr. Bryan said in a straightforward tone. "She got her ways, but she went through the war of Covid with me and she knows the ins and out. That's my pick. I don't mince my words to say this... I try to stay out of it because it's a board decision. These people went through the depth of Covid with me, she and Dr. Amaro. I know what they could do and I know what they're capable of. I don't know anybody else, those are the people that I support."

Mr. Bryan's comments speak to a chief executive who tries to stay out of the selection process. "I don't get involved; I told them to pick the best person they can," Mr. Bryan said.

He added, "We have a lot of hiccups at the Juan Luis Hospital, but you've got to realize that given the circumstances people have to work under, it's a failing job. Me, I'd hire somebody who knows what the deal is every single day, not somebody who's coming in to learn. But the board, maybe, has a different opinion..."

The governor said while his voice has influence, it was still up to the board. "How I feel is important, but more important is the consensus of the board," he said.

The governor added, "Remember, people watch me govern and they have all kinds of opinions, but there's no way they could ever have as much facts as I have, so when I make a decision they might not understand.

"Now, the board has more intimate knowledge of the relationship between them [Ms. Williams] and the board. When they make that decision, they're working with her every single day doing every single thing...So my perspective is not as in-depth as theirs; I have to rely on them unless I think it's something egregious. That's why I ask that I meet with the CEOs before they are hired. Because when I sit down with them, I'm going to tell them what the deal is."

Mr. Bryan said the role of a CEO for WAPA or even the hospitals is more than meets the eye. He stated that while it is important that one has the requisite skills befitting the position, it was also a job fraught with political potholes that must be navigated by the chosen candidates. "This is a political position," he said. "Whether you like it or not you have a community that you're going to have to answer to every single day, a Legislature you're going to have to answer to every single day, and a board. And if you can't maneuver and understand that situation, you're going to be in trouble."

The governor said it's one of the reasons his administration tries earnestly to hire locals. "Because they know what they're getting into."

Ms. Williams took the helm at the hospital after [the turbulent tenure of Ms. Reuben](#) approximately one year to date since the devastating hurricanes of 2017. She has led the medical facility through

some of its most difficult adversities, all while working to transition operations from the current building to modular units called JFL North.

Even so, the hospital continues to struggle with operations, with residents routinely lambasting the facility as low quality, many contending they would rather fly to the mainland for health care. Others have spoken of the prolonged wait times at the emergency room, and protracted wait for procedures such as surgeries — a problem compounded by the hospital's financial constraints.

JFL North, which was supposed to be in operation, is now projected to come online in 2022 — five years after Hurricane Maria. During a February hearing, JFL officials, including Ms. Williams, told senators that [the hospital needed an immediate infusion of cash](#) if it were to continue making payroll. A big reason for the drop in revenue was JFL North's delayed opening which was causing an exodus of patients to the mainland and other destinations for healthcare, hospital officials said.

JFL North's delay appeared to be a lapse in judgement by the current leadership. The delay occurred because a structure that houses oxygen for JFL North, which it cannot operate without, to this day has not been built. Asked about this matter, Ms. Williams said the oxygen facility was always part of the plan, but it was part of plan B, not plan A.

Plan A, she said, was to connect JFL North to the current hospital's oxygen system, a decision she said was made to hasten the process of opening. But the plan backfired.

"We had a first phase approach where the medical gases were supposed to be piped in from our current system," Ms. Williams said during an interview in April. However, the hospital brought in a company to evaluate the feasibility of using the current system, and "they determined that it would not in fact be safe to hook up JFL North, the new hospital, to the existing medical gas system," Ms. Williams said.

She added, "We had always anticipated phase B, which would have been the buildout of the oxygen generator, the construction, the connections the utilities, the trenching." Ms. Williams described the buildout as a "very technically complex build, so it takes time."

She said plan B was always in the works because "we knew that JFL was going to go away. But when the certifying agency did not certify plan A as safe and sound, we then had to quickly transition to plan B, which is taking no less than six to nine months of construction because of the technicality of the build."

She said the design request for proposal for what is called a cement mechanical unit (CMU) that houses all the technical support for the infrastructure of JFL North was sent out late March or early April of this year. Once a vendor is selected, it would take six to nine months for construction of the facility, Ms. Williams stated — easily pushing back the opening of JFL North into 2022.

Asked why wasn't plan B the first option, Ms. Williams said, "Because we were trying to shorten the schedule to the greatest extent possible, and plan A would allow us to do that." She added, "People often want us to hurry up, and when we do those things and it fails then we get punished for it failing."

In April, the hospital came under fire [following the collapse of a nurse](#) who was administering care in the Virgin Islands Cardiac Center (V.I.C.C.) at JFL because of heat of nearly 100 degrees. The nurse was rushed to the emergency room for care. The incident exposed a surfeit of problems

at the hospital, including lack of financial resources and not enough space to house patients following the decommissioning of the hospital's third floor after Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Ms. Williams's exit will not diminish the problems faced by the hospital, many of them beyond the control of the CEO. In October 2019, Senator Novelle Francis called on Governor Albert Bryan to make Ms. Williams the permanent CEO. "I want her to be named; I think she's been acting in the position, she's been doing the work and carrying it out well and I truly believe that she should be named," he told the Consortium during an interview.

Mr. Francis said he was confident in Ms. Dyma's ability to carry out the task of leading the hospital. Additionally, "I think that the employees support her and she has the confidence of the employees, faculty and staff, so I want her to be named," [he said at the time](#). "Put the woman in place."