

logo not found or type unknown

Governor Bryan Calls for V.I. Dept. of Justice Investigation Into Sex Assault Allegations Made Against Senator Steven Payne

Investigations / **Published On May 26, 2022 07:26 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 26, 2022**

Image not found or type unknown



Senator Steven Payne Sr. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

Government House said Thursday evening that Governor Albert Bryan has issued a statement calling on Attorney General Denise George to open an investigation into allegations of sexual abuse made against At-Large Senator Steven Payne by a young woman who alleged that the sexually assaulted her when she was a minor.

“The allegations against Senator Payne revealed recently in the media are serious and disturbing. Although the law presumes his innocence until proven otherwise, the nature of the accusation warrants immediate action. This isn't the first time allegations of inappropriate sexual contact have

been made against individuals in positions of authority," Mr. Bryan said.

The governor's statement comes as pressure builds on Mr. Payne to resign, with the [V.I. Democratic Party calling on the senator to immediately step down](#) or face removal.

"I have asked the Attorney General to ensure these matters are properly investigated and trust that justice will be swift. I want to encourage anyone who has been a victim of any type of improper sexual behavior, harassment, or abuse by an authority figure to come forward," the governor stated.

The Consortium on Wednesday published excerpts of an exclusive interview with Steffi Emilien, a 21-year old Saint Lucian woman who says that she was sent to the USVI to live as a child, and enrolled in the Julius E Sprauve School, to which Payne was assigned when he was a V.I. Police Department officer. She first met Mr. Payne when she joined the V.I. Avengerz, the band he co-managed. Emilien said that Mr. Payne first offered her protection as a father figure shortly after her living conditions deteriorated, but used that access to behave inappropriately towards her on at least three occasions. She said that first, Mr. Payne kissed her on the mouth in a band room on St. John, and that following her relocation to Florida in the aftermath of the 2017 hurricane, he approached her twice more — first requesting a naked massage followed by a shower when they were in a hotel room on the way to Universal Studios, and then confronting her with a sex toy while they were in his his sister's Jacksonville residence.

Before and since the reporting was published, the Consortium has not been able to reach Mr. Payne despite numerous attempts to contact him directly, his office, and his chief of staff. While the Party of which Mr. Payne is a member is the first institution to call on the at-large senator to resign, Consortium journalists understand that a number of members of the 34th Legislature are also mulling over their options when it comes to how to deal with these new allegations.