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USVI Bestselling Author 'Overjoyed' by Governor Bryan's Mental Health Legislation: 'People are Finally Going to Get Help'

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Yassin Hall By. YASSIN HALL

USVI native and mental health advocate Yassin Hall cried tears of joy when she heard that Governor Albert Bryan Jr. [recently submitted legislation](#) aimed at reorganizing how mental and behavioral health, including alcohol and substance addiction, are treated under V.I. law. Hall also learned that V.I. students will receive free mental health counseling.

“It finally happened,” Hall tearfully said. “People are finally going to get help and government funding. I had been inundated with calls from people thanking me for not giving up and for continuing to push it to the forefront, stating that they knew it made a difference.”

It's a long-awaited victory for Hall who has been fighting for the government to do something about mental health in the USVI.

Years ago, as a "Mrs. World OLM" beauty winner, Hall stated that she did not have a role model in her mother who she described as a violent, paranoid schizophrenic. Hall's book, 'Journey Untold: My Mother's Struggle with Mental Illness' is a multi award-winning youth non-fiction work, and has been a bestseller for more than five conservative years. Her recently released 'Beyond the Love Curse: The Journey Continues' has already been nominated for multiple awards and is also a bestseller. Journey Untold is part of the middle school reading curricula in Atlanta, Georgia where Hall now resides.

"To know that this is happening, to see that they are doing something, it means so much," said Hall. "I fought so hard and I remember holding a forum and only four people attended, including my grandmother and the Honorable Senator Marvin Blyden. My grandmother spoke and told stories about my mother that I never knew. She told us that my mother was not crazy; she was sick. So now to know that things are going to be in place to help families, it is a relief."

Hall said while schools in the USVI had counselors for academics, they did not have people in place for children's mental health. The author revealed that she was able to assist in the passing of three major legislative bills: Bill No. 31-0279, which says, "The Department of Education shall cause all public school counselors to be trained and certified in grief and stress counseling"; and Bills No. 32-0084 and 32-0085, which speaks to "extending the time a person may be detained involuntary for mental health treatment," according to the measures' language.

The governor said the Virgin Islands Mental Health and Disabilities Act will address gaps in services to residents who suffer from behavioral health challenges, mental health disorders, developmental disabilities, alcoholism and drug addiction. There are also plans to establish the territory's first government-run behavioral health, mental health, developmental disability and alcohol and substance abuse facility.

Hall said she was overjoyed to learn that the government was looking to develop residential psychiatric facilities, community-based crisis services, inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services with case management, medication-assisted treatment and associated recovery support, detoxification services, and affordable supportive housing.

"I am glad because now that the need is recognized at a government level, funding will be a big help," she said.

"A few years ago the CDC tried to assist but word was getting back that there was no mental health issue in the USVI. I even put out videos on social media stating they can't provide help unless the need is recognized. Some funding was later provided but now with the legislation that was proposed, this is going to be life-changing. I am just so overjoyed by this news. I'm so happy for my beloved community and for the future generations to come," Hall concluded.

Though an Atlanta resident, Hall frequently returns to her home, the U.S. Virgin Islands to continue advocating for mental health. She is also a highly sought after speaker and panelist who has shared her story with several major platforms.