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Lt. Governor Officially Announces Individual Health Insurance Provider in USVI

Health / **Published On May 25, 2023 05:33 AM /**

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Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach has made good on an [earlier promise](#) to provide access to individual health insurance in the USVI. On Wednesday, he introduced the public to Optimum Global, which is offering individual, private medical insurance to residents of the territory.

The Consortium [reported on the new provider earlier this month](#). Optimum Global is providing coverage through a partnership with the Caribbean Risk Group, which has been offering insurance in the territory for several years.

The Optimum Global, which started providing individual healthcare coverage at the beginning of the month, is filling a void that has existed for several years, according to the lieutenant governor.

Roach explained that the Affordable Care Act, now celebrating its 13th year, did not extend to the territories, resulting in a dearth of companies providing individual insurance products. This left approximately 30 percent of the U.S. Virgin Islands population uninsured. "The absence of a mandate that everybody has to have health insurance, which is contained in the Affordable Care Act, has been a deterrent for persons interested in this market," said the lieutenant governor. He added that the size of the Virgin Islands market has traditionally been seen as unattractive for larger insurance players such as Blue Cross Blue Shield.

"Our staff even traveled to Trinidad and Tobago to speak with the company who provides an individual insurance product to our neighbor, the residents of the British Virgin Islands," Roach said, explaining the lengths to which USVI officials went to find a company that would be able to fill the void. Ultimately however, it was Optimum Global which best fit the territory's unique needs.

The company has been operational since 2005, with offices in the UK, Guernsey, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Peter Saunders, Optimum Global's Head of Business Development, revealed that they currently serve about 30,000 customers in 130 countries worldwide.

"We are private medical insurance specialists," Saunders said. "Our whole raison d'etre is to put programs together in markets where they are generally small, or the quality of healthcare is poor. Our product is an international product where you're allowed to have treatment anywhere you want because people can use the products when they're traveling or when they're on business."

Christine Young, speaking on behalf of Optimum Global, detailed the range of products available, from an inpatient-only plan to inpatient-outpatient policies. Optional benefits include routine dental and maternity coverage. The policies also offer international coverage, enabling policyholders to receive treatment in the USA or any other country.

"We've designed different options for people. The standard plans will always cover your in-hospital treatment, and as you increase your coverage, there are options for GP cover or wellbeing benefits," Young explained. Responding to a question from the public, Ms. Young noted that providing ballpark pricing figures would be near impossible, because costs would vary based on the age of the insured and the chosen plan. The pricing structure includes age bands in five-year increments, as well as a selection of deductible options. "If anyone would like a quote specifically, we can give the details on the options," Ms. Young said.

Meanwhile, Roach emphasized that the official introduction did not mean future special treatment for Optimum Global. Any filings that the company submits will receive the same level of scrutiny as any other business in the territory, the lieutenant governor asserted.

Roach emphasized that his office is committed to consumer advocacy, with robust systems in place to investigate complaints about insurance or banking institutions. "We want to make sure that people know that we have processes in place to review complaints and have hearings on any issues that are brought to us by consumers," Roach stated.