

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$75 Million FEMA Grant Awarded to V.I. Department of Education for Reconstruction of Alfredo Andrews Elementary School

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ST. CROIX — Delegate to Congress Stacey E. Plaskett announced on Thursday that the Alfredo Andrews Elementary School in St. Croix is set to receive a \$75,499,497.16 grant. This funding, awarded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will aid in the demolition and reconstruction of the school which was severely damaged due to the onslaught of Hurricane Maria.

The substantial grant is sanctioned under Section 428 of the Robert T. Stafford Act. This comes after Ms. Plaskett's successful initiative to secure provisions in the Bipartisan

Budget Act of 2018, according to the statement. The provisions guarantee FEMA's authority to repair and replace Virgin Islands' infrastructure with resilient designs and features, independent of their condition before the disaster. This is especially pertinent for the recovery period following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"The forthcoming construction of Alfredo Andrews Elementary School will not merely restore its original state, but will elevate its standards," Plaskett remarked. She emphasized the use of cutting-edge resilient engineering and building techniques in the reconstruction process, thereby ensuring the school's durability against future natural disasters. The school's new design will not only stand as a symbol of resilience but also facilitate an enhanced educational environment for the youth.

Highlighting the collective effort and collaboration, Ms. Plaskett praised Governor Albert Bryan, the Office of Disaster Recovery which was created by the governor, and the V.I. Department of Education. "Their concerted efforts and dedication to recovery were pivotal in making a compelling case to FEMA, allowing us to leverage the law's amendments for our benefit," she said.

Ms. Plaskett expressed her optimism and commitment to the project's success, saying, "This marks a significant stride in our broader rebuilding journey. I'm wholeheartedly committed to collaborating closely with the involved offices to ensure that every dollar of this grant is directed effectively."

The timeline for the project's initiation and completion remains to be announced.