

33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Office of Senator Gittens



*The Honorable
Kenneth L. Gittens
Senator*

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COMMITTEE MEMBER:
Committee on Rules and Judiciary

Committee on Government
Operations, Consumer Affairs,
Energy, Environment, and Planning

Committee on Education and
Workforce Development

Committee on Health, Hospitals and
Human Services

Committee on Homeland Security,
Justice, Public Safety
and Veterans' Affairs

Committee of the Whole

June 17, 2019

Ms. Justa Encarnacion
Commissioner-Designee
Department of Health
3500 East Street
Christiansted, V.I. 00820

Dear Commissioner-Designee Encarnacion,

I hope that this correspondence meets you in the best of health and spirits. Following up on our previous discussions regarding the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) on St. Croix, I am formally writing to bring to your immediate attention an issue that continues to plague the residents of Frederiksted. As you are aware, ambulance services that once operated from the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital is now operating from the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital. This has resulted in delayed response for ambulance services on St. Croix and is causing a great amount of concern in our community.

Since 2017, or there about, ambulances on St. Croix have been stationed at the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital which is located on the eastern end of the island. In the event of an emergency call in the Frederiksted area, the ambulance must now traverse a longer distance to provide emergency medical services in the Frederiksted area. This often takes as long as 30 minutes and could result in lost valuable response time and, in a worst-case-scenario, even a preventable loss of life. As you know, every second counts.


I am hoping that with you at the helm of our Health Department we can find a way to relocate the ambulance dispatch station back to the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center in Estate Diamond Ruby, which is much more centrally located in the event of an emergency in any area of St. Croix. We must continue to work toward the ultimate goal of stationing ambulances closer to our population centers on both the west and east ends of the island. However, moving our ambulance base back to JFL presents the most acceptable solution in the interim.

We have a responsibility to provide our residents with quick and efficient medical attention in the event of an emergency. Unfortunately, if the ambulances remain stationed at Charles Harwood, our Frederiksted residents remain at risk given the disproportionate amount of time it takes for them to receive assistance. We have discussed this matter on more than one occasion and know that the area within the JFL facility is still available.

Letter to Commissioner Justa Encarnacion - DOH
Emergency Medical Services
Monday, 17 June 2019
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I look forward to further discussing this matter with you at your earliest availability. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the numbers on this stationery.

Sincerely,



Kenneth L. Gittens
Senator

xc: Honorable Albert Bryan, Jr., Governor
ALL Members of the 33rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands