

**TESTIMONY ON BILL NO. 31-0062-1 AND  
BILL NO. 31-0062-2**

**SUBMITTED BY:**

**DR. VALDEMAR A. HILL, JR.**

**(March 12, 2015)**

Good morning Senate President, Neville James, sponsoring senators of Bill No. 31-0062-1 and 31-0062-2, other distinguished senate members in attendance, and to the listening and viewing audience. My name is Dr. Valdemar A. Hill, Jr. and I appear before you today testify on Bill No. 31-0062-1 an Act providing funding for the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center's System Improvement Agreement with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; and Bill No. 31-0062-2 an Act authorizing the district boards of the Virgin Islands Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation to appoint two members to their respective district boards.

I have served on the Board of Directors and as its Chair for several years at the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center. During that period of time the Hospital experienced many financial battles and is no stranger in trying to keeping its head above the proverbial financial waters. I recall having the privilege, as chairman of the board, to head up a delegation of senior hospital executives in 2010 to travel to Chicago to defend the hospital's plan to overcome some deficiencies that had been disclosed in a Joint Commission report. The delegation was comprised of the then CEO, COO, CNO and the current CEO. We were very successful in convincing the Commission to accept our plan and we returned home to execute the plan.

During my tenure I noticed that during the crunch times, the executive staff and rank and file employees always rolled up their sleeves and got the job done.

However, economic hard times, a reduction in financial support from the central government, unfunded mandates, escalating costs, and uncompensated care have all taken

their toll on the hospital to carry out its fiduciary and statutory mandates in an effective and efficient way.

Recognizing that the Hospital is the only such institution on St. Croix, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) has always been sympathetic to the financial plight of the Hospital. However, there comes a time when, even they too must carry out their own legal and policy responsibilities. This is the time. Nevertheless, notwithstanding CMS's letter of September 17, 2014 to the Hospital terminating its participation in the Medicare program effective October 9, 2014, it still granted the Hospital an extension for a period of nine (9) months.

A Systems Improvement Agreement has been prepared and agreed to by CMS. This is it. This is the last straw. There is no turning back from here. The Hospital must go forward and comply with the multiple Conditions of Participation found in the August 2014 survey. If not, it will surely see its demise as a full-fledged, accredited hospital. I don't think any of us want to see that happen.

I have been removed from the hospital in a formal capacity for several years now but I can attest to the dedication, commitment, and desire by the staff to have the Hospital regain its position of prominence once again.

Nevertheless, all the good efforts alone will not restore it to that position. A major infusion of cash is required, and for that reason I am in support of Bill No. 31-0062-1. This measure attests to the commitment by the 31<sup>st</sup> Legislature to do what is right on behalf of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center.

In regard to Bill No. 31-006-2, An Act authorizing the district boards of the Virgin Islands Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation to appoint two members to their respective district boards, I offer my testimony in support of that measure as well. As a former district board member and chair, and member of the Hospital Territorial Board, I know, first hand, the importance of having a fully functioning board that provides the greatest probability of hosting a quorum at every meeting.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify in regard to the Bills above mentioned.