

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND
CONSUMER PROTECTION**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

FRITS E. LAWETZ LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE ROOM – ST. CROIX

TESTIMONY

VIVIAN I. EBBESEN-FLUDD

Bill NO: 35-0102

“An Act honoring and commending Ralph A. de Chabert, M.D. for outstanding contributions in the medical field to the people of the Virgin Islands and his many civic contributions to the community, especially the island of St. Croix, and to name the Labor and Delivery/Post Partum Unit “Maternity Services” at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center North in his honor.”

Good Afternoon, Honorable Senator Carla J. Josphe, Chairperson of the Committee On Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protection; Vice Chairperson Honorable Javan E. James, Sr.; Committee Members Honorable Senators: Kenneth L. Gittens, Samuel Carrion, Alma Francis Heyliger, Ray Fonseca and Milton E. Potter; Honorable Non-Committee Members present, Staff, the listening and viewing audience, I am Vivian I. Ebbesen-Fludd, Former Executive Director of Frederiksted Health Center/Ingeborg Nesbitt Clinic, Former Founding Executive Director of Frederiksted Health Care, Inc., Former Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Health, Former Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services and now private citizen involved in civic and health care activities locally and on the mainland.

I am humbled to be invited and pleased to be present to provide Testimony in support of the Honorable Senator Marise C. James’ Bill No: 35-0102: “An Act honoring and commending Ralph A. de Chabert, M.D. for outstanding contributions in the medical field to the people of the Virgin Islands and his many civic contributions to the community, especially the island of St. Croix, and to name the Labor and Delivery/Post Partum Unit “Maternity Services” at the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center North in his honor .” As I reviewed Bill No: 35-0102 and read the noted Whereas clauses, I must emphatically indicate that I will briefly emphasize many of them in my Testimony based on personal knowledge and experience, as I render my support of the proposed legislation. In support of the measure, I also wish to suggest that consideration be given for a provision in the legislation that would allow the same honor and commendation being considered today, to be transferable to the new Labor and Delivery/Post Partum Unit - “Maternity Services” in the pending new hospital facility on St. Croix. Inclusion of this provision if not previously considered and if protocol so allows, will facilitate the effort that the legacy, honor, and significance will not be lost once the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center – North Labor and Delivery/Post Partum Unit location is no longer utilized for the indicated patient services. On many occasions it has become practice that when an area is repurposed the honor previously bestowed is lost, when it is not redesignated, relocated/transferred and therefore the honorees recognition of their significant contribution and historical perspective are lost.

In speaking to Bill: 35-0102 I must frankly disclose that Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert, his offsprings and siblings are relatives, as they are cousins of my late father George A. Ebbesen; and he has also been a long-time colleague in developing, sustaining, and improving the health care system of the U.S. Virgin Islands with my late mother Enid M. Ebbesen for over fifty (50) years. But ironically enough I can safely state that sitting before

you today, is one of those noted more than fifteen thousand (15,000) obstetrical deliveries on the island of St. Croix. Yes, one of those “Crucian Babies” that he continued to maintain contact with throughout my professional and personal endeavors. I have had the pleasure of having numerous conversations with and received genuine encouragement, as well as follow up interest from Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert as I considered, embarked, and advanced in my career in the health care field. He never missed the opportunity and remained consistent in his focus to plant the seed, while always doing his best to recruit young Virgin Islander to return home to build and serve their community.

I was privileged to have worked with “Dr. de Chabert” or the “The Chief” as he was affectionately called, in his role as Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology as a fledging Nursing Summer Student, Graduate Nurse and then full-fledged Registered Nurse on the Labor & Delivery and Post Partum Units, and the Obstetrical Community Health Clinics, at the then St. Croix Hospital and Community Health Center. When “The Chief” spoke everyone respectfully listened. He never failed to set, expect, and maintain his established high standards of care of experienced or novice health care staff, in the combined Health and Hospital system of care. A combined model of care that worked seamlessly together for the best health care outcomes of the patient, their family, and the community, long before it became a standard of care on the U.S mainland. In addition, like others I can also attest to having also been on the receiving end of his expertise, care, and concern as a patient in need of emergency services, while remaining and keeping me calm in a life-threatening situation with a favorable outcome.

Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert was and remains soft spoken by nature, but I have had the opportunity to witness on numerous occasions his demonstration of his lack of fear to be hands on, while expressing his expectations softly but forcefully when it came to health care services, patient care, and expected health care outcomes. I was a member of the staff on hand and witnessed his work, leadership, and endurance together with other staff members at the then St. Croix Hospital and Community Health Center, during the twenty-seven (27) hours of rage and devastation caused by the Category 4 - Hurricane Hugo on September 17, 1989. As we weathered the storm and faced the one certainty of residents, patients, mothers, babies, and a community needing our care, he was ever present and doing his part. No task was to menial. He was hands on and boots on the ground, as we worked together to return and initiate hospital services at Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital making accommodations as needed, transferring patients to Puerto Rico for care via Helicopters and on Coast Cutters, and then transitioned hospital services to the U.S. Military Deployed Medical Units. Yes, the famous “DEP-MEDS that were originally made for MEN in the field and had never been used in civilian life, to now be used and accommodated for Obstetrical and Gynecological patients in the midst of the devastation and the vast unknowns. Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert and the “seasoned health care leadership” never wavered. We would always share a lite moment during it all, that “now where we use to park, is now where we work”, as we made accommodations daily to provide quality care and make the patients, as well as staff comfortable despite the situation.

Although he was retired, I could count on receiving a call, scheduling a meeting, receiving a message or getting a visit from Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert in all my former roles of Executive Director of Frederiksted Health Center/Ingeborg Nesbitt Clinic, Founding Executive Director of Frederiksted Heath Care, Inc., Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Health, and Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services, always providing words of wisdom, matters of concern, ideas for improvement and encouragement for the continued provision of services in the best interest of the patients and residents of St. Croix and these beautiful United States Virgin Islands.

In closing, I could go on and on, but in the interest of the time allotted for Testimony and based upon my side-by-side experiences with and observations of Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert, I can safely state without unwavering fear of contradiction, Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert, a humble stalwart in our health care arena specifically and our community in general, not forgetting his love for people, horse racing and farming, is most deserving of this honor. Dr. Ralph A. de Chabert has spent his career and lifetime contributing to and shaping the health care services, as well as the community in the United States Virgin Islands and St. Croix in particular, and for that he should be duly recognized with this honor. I remain in support of this measure, again ask for your consideration of the suggested provision if protocol so allows, thank you for the invitation, and remain humbled by the opportunity to provide Testimony and input on Bill No: 35-0102. I remain present and available for any questions this Committee may have.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Vivian I. Ebbesen-Fludd", followed by the initials "/s/". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Vivian I. Ebbesen-Fludd

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