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Bill No. 35-0119

Department of Health to Develop and Approve Mobile Integrated Healthcare Programs



PRESENTED BY
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Submitted to
SENATOR RAY FONSECA, CHAIRMAN
Senate Committee on Health, Hospitals & Human Services
Fritz E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room, St. Croix
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3 Good morning, Senator Ray Fonseca, Chairman, Committee on Health, Hospitals &
4 Human Services, other committee members, 35th Legislature Staff, and those in the
5 viewing and listening audience.

6 I am Daryl D. Jaschen, Director of the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency
7 Management Agency (VITEMA) and I am here to day to provide testimony in
8 support of Bill No. 35-0119, an Act Amending Title 19 Virgin Islands code by
9 adding a chapter 7a, directing the Department of Health to develop and approve
10 Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) programs, sponsored by Senator Marise C.
11 James.

12 Background

13 VITEMA is responsible for the Territory 9-1-1 Emergency Communications
14 Center (ECC) which provides the ability for individuals to call from landline or
15 mobile phone to 9-1-1 for emergencies which require immediate assessment and
16 potential dispatch of first responders in by Fire, Emergency Medical Services, or
17 Police. In some cases, as in an overturned vehicle, the immediate dispatch of all
18 three first responses occurs. Currently requests for emergency services are received
19 by voice phone call and dispatched via voice by radio on the Bureau of
20 Information Technology (BIT) maintained trunking system. The VITEMA 9-1-1
21 ECC are distinct by each district with 9-1-1 St. Croix serving the island of St.
22 Croix and the 9-1-1 ECC St. Thomas serving the islands of St. Thomas, St. John,
23 and Water Island. Incoming calls can be transferred between 9-1-1 ECCs but
24 dispatching of Fire, EMS, or Police is limited to within each distinct district.

25 There are some areas of the Territory where due to limited cell phone coverage
26 there is no 9-1-1 coverage and, in some cases, and by design of mobile network
27 carriers, calls for 9-1-1 go to the BVI 9-1-1 ECC or to the Puerto Rico 9-1-1 ECC.
28 Those calls are manually transferred by operators in the BVI and Puerto Rico to

29 the appropriate Territory 9-1-1 ECC on St. Thomas or St. Croix. Finally, members
30 of the 9-1-1 ECC who are dispatchers are part of the United Steel Workers
31 Collective Bargaining Unit.

32 Proposed Changes

33 There are three sections in Bill No. 35-0119 which reference 9-1-1. First is section
34 156, subsection (b), which refers to “911 nurse triage lines”. Second is also in
35 section 156, subsection (e)(9), referring to having “an activated 911 system” and
36 the third, in subsection (f), which refers to “911 triage assessment tools”.

37 The current VITEMA 9-1-1 ECC does not have any 9-1-1 nurse triage phone lines
38 nor is there a requirement for qualified nurses to be part of the 9-1-1 ECC. 9-1-1
39 operators do use a cue card system called ProQA to assist in any medical calls for
40 emergency and permits the operator and caller to conduct very basic assessment on
41 the level of emergency. The VITEMA 9-1-1 is currently activate in 99% voice
42 response capability but does have a small number of calls received automatically
43 from businesses with a security alarm activation, which result in the 9-1-1 ECC
44 operator dispatching Police.

45 In the past, discussions with VITEMA with private sector medical response
46 companies with services which provide calls for assistance, such as an alert from a
47 fall, requires the individual to activate a responder which goes directly to the
48 service company and does not go to 9-1-1. With the recent upgrade in the
49 VITEMA telecommunications system, such additional capability may now be
50 available but will take joint testing to validate and determine any limitations, such
51 as geographic non-available areas, on a case-by-case basis.

52 Closing

53 As with any new technology and a variety of telecommunications providers,
54 extensive testing and trials are required before deploying a system for medical
55 health professionals and patients. VITEMA is willing to work with the Department
56 of Health and any vendors in providing a working solution to Mobile Integrated
57 Healthcare programs. Again, VITEMA supports Bill No. 35-0119, which seeks to
58 amend Title 19 Virgin Islands code by adding a chapter 7a, directing the
59 Department of Health to develop and approve Mobile Integrated Health (MIH)
60 programs.

61 Thank you, Committee Chairman, Senator Ray Fonseca, for this opportunity to
62 provide Testimony. I am prepared to address any questions you may have at this
63 time.

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