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**TESTIMONY TO THE 35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS, AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

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Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Ray Fonseca, Chairman of the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, other Senators present, the listening and viewing audience. I am Attorney Tina M. Comissiong, MPA, Chief Executive Officer of Schneider Regional Medical Center (SRMC). I would like to thank this Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill No. 35-0119, the proposed legislation amending Title 19 of the Virgin Islands Code to add a chapter which develops and approves a mobile integrated healthcare program.

Mobile healthcare programs serve an important role in the health care system, providing care to some of the most vulnerable people in the community. The most common and valuable service models for mobile healthcare programs are primary care and prevention. A mobile healthcare program that focuses on primary care and preventative care can improve access to healthcare for Virgin Islanders. The mobile healthcare program that is being proposed can help people in our community who otherwise are not able to access primary care to get cared for and will help get them referred to and connected to clinical facilities with specialty care and outpatient services like SRMC.

SRMC provides emergency care, acute inpatient care, specialty care, and outpatient services (including rehabilitation, laboratory, and radiology) to our community. We are currently increasing the specialty care we offer by adding gastroenterology and interventional cardiology. Yet, we know many in our community still face barriers

to accessing important primary and preventative care and in getting referred to SRMC. We support the establishment or enhancement of a mobile integrated health program that provides primary care and preventative care and refers patients to our system.

As a small Territory, we are often impacted and sometimes challenged by the limited availability of primary care. We appreciate the efforts of this Legislative body for giving attention to the importance of expanding access to care and for this proposed legislation that seeks to enhance primary care options for those most in need who may not be able to access this care through traditional channels. Expanding access to preventative and primary care will positively impact the overall healthcare system of the Territory. It will help people get seen and screened earlier, so they do not present to the Hospital in an advanced state in their disease. It will also help to decrease the volume of patients who presently rely on the Emergency Departments for their primary care.

We want to ensure access to the best care possible for the residents in our community. To that end, we continue to work in partnership with the Department of Health to close gaps in access to healthcare and we support initiatives such as these that work towards the expansion of preventative and primary healthcare in the Virgin Islands. SRMC will be an important partner in accepting referrals from the mobile healthcare program when it is established. We hope that adequate resources and funding will be allocated for the important healthcare that will be provided through the mobile integrated healthcare program.

Thank you again for allowing me to offer support towards this legislation. This concludes my testimony. I will remain available for any questions that you may have.