

The Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services

**The Honorable Senator Ray Fonseca
Chairman of the Committee**

Bill No. 36-0280

**An Act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part IV, Chapter 37, to
provide a parent of a newborn child born in a government hospital with
the option to receive the child's birth certificate by mail**

**Sponsored by:
Senator Hubert L. Frederick**

**Testimony By:
Darlene A. Baptiste, MA Ed., RTT, EMT, CPM, LSSBG
Chief Executive Officer**

**Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center
-and-
Schneider Regional Medical Center**

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 info@jflusvi.org
 340-778-6311
 www.jflusvi.org
 [jflusvi](https://www.facebook.com/jflusvi)

Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Ray Fonseca, Chairman of the Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services; esteemed Senators of the 36th Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands; the dedicated staff of Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center and Schneider Regional Medical Center; and members of the listening and viewing audience.

My name is Darlene Baptiste, Chief Executive Officer of Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center (JFL) and Schneider Regional Medical Center (SRMC). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Bill No. 36-0280, an Act amending Title 19, Virgin Islands Code, Part IV, Chapter 37, Subchapter II, Section 831(a)(2), to provide parents of newborn children born in a government hospital with the option to receive their child's certified birth certificate by mail.

JFL and SRMC support the intent of Bill No. 36-0280 and the proposed amendment to improve the birth certificate process for families. Giving parents the option to receive a certified birth certificate by mail adds convenience and accessibility during an important transition for families with newborn children.

Our hospitals' current birth-registration processes already align substantially with the proposed legislation. Through our collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Health's Office of Vital Statistics, the Mother Baby/Labor & Delivery Units collect and electronically submit the required birth information through the Vital Statistics online portal before discharge, including applicable paternity acknowledgment documentation.

Before discharge, parents are also provided with information from the Office of Vital Statistics explaining the process for obtaining a certified copy of their newborn's U.S. Standard Certificate of Live Birth.

The implementation of the Vital Statistics online portal has significantly streamlined this process and has supported an effective working relationship between the hospitals and the Office of Vital Statistics. Once the hospital has accurately collected, verified, and electronically submitted the required birth information, its role in the birth-registration process is essentially complete. The subsequent processing, issuance, and delivery of the certified birth certificate are responsibilities of the Office of Vital Statistics.

Accordingly, JFL and SRMC support providing parents with the option to receive their newborn's certified birth certificate by mail. We also believe it is important that parents be informed of this option before discharge.

We believe this bill accomplishes the intent of the legislation while ensuring that parents are made aware of the mailing option before leaving the hospital. It also preserves the appropriate roles of the hospitals and the Office of Vital Statistics in the birth registration and certification process.

JFL and SRMC support Bill No. 36-0280 with the proposed revision and look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Office of Vital Statistics to provide an efficient and convenient process for Virgin Islands families.

Thank you, Chairman Fonseca and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am available to answer any questions you may have.