



LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Nereida "Nellie" Rivera-O'Reilly
Senator

September 9, 2014

Via Email and Facsimile

Attorney Henry C. Smock
Chairman of the Board
University of the Virgin Islands
Office of the Board of Trustees
No. 2 John Brewers Bay
St. Thomas, VI 00802
Email: Henry.Smock@uvi.edu

Re: Decision on location of the University of the Virgin Islands Medical School

Dear Attorney Smock:

I write this letter on behalf of the people of St. Croix to ask you as Chair, and all your fellow Trustees of the University of the Virgin Islands to build the new Medical School on the island of St. Croix.

In time, the Medical School will become both an "anchor" and a "keystone" for the entire territory. However, since the close of the Hovensa refinery and the ensuing exodus of resources and people from my district, St. Croix desperately needs the long-term commitment from the University at this time.

We are ideally suited for this project. The Albert Sheen Campus has ample space, with the UVI Technical Park and UVI's School of Nursing on campus and St. Croix Educational Complex across the street. Juan Luis Hospital is a short distance from UVI, with easy public transportation between the two, and additional space for expansion both within the hospital and nearby. Both the UVI campus and JLH have already been activated with viNGN, high-speed Access Points, providing the Medical School with the Internet band-width needed to serve the technical demands of its program.

Additionally, Barry University has already established its Physician's Assistants Program on St. Croix. Together, all of these factors will provide the synergy and resources needed to launch a successful Medical School.

In 2012, St. Croix lost 2000 direct jobs at the Hovensa refinery, with untold contractor, sub-contractor, and inter-connected employment leaving as well. Unemployment on St. Croix has risen to over 14% and continues to climb. Our island not only needs to recover from this huge loss, all of the U.S. Virgin Islands need St. Croix to recover from its current plight.

Building the Medical School on St. Croix would bring much short-term economic relief, while becoming a long-term multiplier of increased employment, advanced technology, and improved

health services. Cooper Union Hospital in Camden, NJ, estimates that its decision to build a Medical College in conjunction with Rowan University will generate \$3 of economic activity for every \$1 invested. (<http://www.cooperhealth.edu/medical-school>). In 2012, the American Association of Medical Colleges reported in its The Economic Impact of AAMC-Medical Schools and Teaching Hospitals -

"AAMC-member organizations have substantial economic and social impacts on their multi-county regions and within the counties and cities where they have operations. Substantial local and regional tax impacts, while beyond the scope of this study, are estimated to be in the billions. Communities in all regions of the country typically rely on these organizations for job creation, high-quality medical care, advanced research, new business development, and education of medical professionals."

(<https://www.aamc.org/download/326478/data/trippumbachcorrected.pdf>).

Looking ahead, building a Medical School on St. Croix would provide the foundation for developing retirement communities and medical services on our island. We are fortunate to have the space and desirable sites for new construction; we have the climate and life style that seniors are looking for; and with the increase of medical services on St. Croix I see our island becoming a retirement destination that would serve the needs of both Virgin Islanders and state-side residents.

As you consider your decision where to build the new Medical School I ask you to be pragmatic and compassionate. Not only is St. Croix the best place to locate this program, but St. Croix needs this project now more than ever. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nellie Rivera O'Reilly

Cc: The Honorable John P. de Jongh, Jr. – Honorary Chairman
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Commissioner Donna Frett Gregory – ex-officio
Mr. Oswin Sewer, Sr. – ex-officio
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Ms. Wendy Aurelien – Student Representative 2014-2015
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Mrs. Gwendolyn Adams Norton
Mrs. Jennifer Nugent-Hill
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