

## **FIRST AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT TASK FORCE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY**

**Date :** March 22, 2017

The American Health Care Act (AHCA) Task Force held its first meeting Monday morning, March 20, 2017 at the American Association of Retired Persons' (AARP) office in Sunny Isle.

In attendance were the Department of Health, Department of Human Services, leadership of the federally qualified health centers, the hospitals, and AARP, members of the Virgin Islands Legislature, the Virgin Islands Source, representatives from the Women's March, and representatives from the Office of Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett. As a cost saving measure, video and audio technology were made available at each respective location to connect representatives on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and Washington D.C.

The task force is the result of the roundtable discussion held last week. The discussion focused on reform, challenges, and processes in the areas of presumptive eligibility and emergency room visits; expanding enrollees in the Medical Assistance Program (MAP); patient care follow-up under MAP; maximizing utilization of the clinics and urgent care centers; prescriptions and medication; and off-island care.

Stakeholders also shared each of their agencies respective strategies to combat the American Health Care Act (AHCA), which would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

In addition, an act sponsored by Senator Rivera-O'Reilly to privatize the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center was discussed. It is conceivable that privatization would relieve the local government of some financial strain, as well as ensure the provision of quality healthcare in the Virgin Islands.

The meeting ended on a few positive notes, demonstrating officials' commitment to delivering quality health care. Fast track in the hospital will re-launch April 20, 2017. Three out of the eight health clinics have qualified to participate in the National Health Services Corp for loan repayment of clinicians. Mechanisms have already been put in place to address presumptive eligibility. The office of Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett shared its ongoing efforts to discuss the effects the AHCA would have on the Virgin Islands with the administration. The game plan is that each agency move forward with its strategies. Stakeholders will meet again in April to share the progress made with their plans.

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