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ROY LESTER SCHNEIDER
HOSPITAL

MYRAH KEATING SMITH
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

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**TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE
ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS AND HUMAN SERVICES
34th LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
April 13, 2021**

Good Morning, Honorable Senator Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, other members of the 34th Legislature present, fellow testifiers, members of the press, the viewing and listening audiences; I am Dr. Luis O. Amaro, Interim Chief Executive Officer of Schneider Regional Medical Center (SRMC).

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on behalf of SRMC on the proposed Legislation, BR 21-0134 (formerly Bill No. 33-0228), an Act amending title 27, chapter 1 of the Virgin Islands Code by adding a new subchapter 5 a. establishing the Nurse Licensure Compact to create a multistate nursing license.

Primarily we agree with the tenets of this Bill. Specifically, its aim to significantly improve the long and arduous RN licensing process here in the Virgin Islands. Given our critical shortage of RNs and Allied Health Professionals, we need new approaches to improve access to essential personnel. Having a National Nurse Licensure Compact will give us such access by allowing these professionals the option and convenience of choosing multiple locations to work from, including the Virgin Islands.

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. (NCSBN), the Nurse Licensure Compact allows a nurse whose primary state of residence is in an NLC state to hold one multistate license, with authority to practice in person or via telehealth in both their home state and 33 other NLC states, which fosters greater nurse mobility and the public's access to health care.

The COVID Pandemic highlighted our critical need for such clinical professionals. There was essentially a bidding war for RNs at the height of this crisis.

Without the support of travelers and Pafford Staffing, we would not have been able to develop and maintain our facilities to accommodate our local population in the event of a COVID surge.

The benefits of the NLC are numerous, but we are also cautious of the risks that are associated with deficiencies in background checks and licensure requirements. Each state or territory has different requirements for its nursing and allied professional licenses. This could mean some of the VI Licensure Board requirements may not be addressed in the Compact's uniform policy. As such, we must ensure the compliance and enforcement noted under Article 5 of this Bill, which requires states to participate in the enhanced NLC to conduct federal criminal background checks to determine eligibility for a multistate license. We must ensure all safeguards that are built into our current state licensing process are required before a nurse is issued a multistate license. And that the nurses practicing within the NLC have met a set of minimum requirements, regardless of the home state in which they are licensed.

Honorable Chairman Francis and members of the Committee on Health, Hospitals, and Human Services, thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to give testimony on this proposed legislation. I am prepared to take your questions.

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