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Virgin Islands Receives $485,000 To Help Two Health Centers Expand Testing Capabilities

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded almost $485,000 in federal aid funding to the Virgin Islands to support two health clinics in their efforts to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and expand testing for the virus.

Frederiksted Health Care Inc. on St. Croix was awarded $275,719 and the East End Medical Center on St. Thomas was awarded $209,149.

Health centers will use the funding to expand the range of testing and testing-related activities to best address the needs of their local communities, including the purchase of personal protective equipment; training for staff, outreach, procurement and administration of tests; laboratory services; notifying identified contacts of infected health center patients of their exposure to COVID-19; and the expansion of walk-up or drive-up testing capabilities.

The federal funding is part of the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act, signed into law April 24. Through its Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HHS awarded $583 million to 1,385 HRSA-funded health centers in the United States and its Territories.

Health Centers are currently providing more than 100,000 weekly COVID-19 tests in their local communities, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. Nearly 88 percent of HRSA-funded health centers report testing patients, with more than 65 percent of them offering walk-in or drive-up testing, according to HHS.

“Widespread testing is a critical step in reopening America, and health centers are vital to making testing easily accessible, especially for underserved and minority populations,” HHS Secretary Alex Azar said. “Because health centers can help notify contacts of patients who test positive, they will continue playing an important role in cooperating with state and local public health departments.”

To date the Virgin Islands Department of Health has tested 1,242 individuals for COVID-19 in the territory. Of those, 69 individuals have tested positive and 1,115 tested negative. There are currently 58 tests pending.

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