



## THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Charlotte Amalie, V.I. 00802  
340-774-0001

### MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

\*\*\*\*\*

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

\*\*\*\*\*

### A PROCLAMATION

The nation's annual report on health, *Health United States, 1983*, noted that while the nation's health was continuing to improve, there were glaring disparities in the health and longevity of non-Hispanic, whites and racial and ethnic minorities, the then Secretary of Health and Human Services, Margaret M. Heckler, took unprecedented action and established the Task Force on Black and Minority Health to document the extent of those health disparities.

Ms. Heckler's presentation of the history of the Heckler Report at the 2009 Caribbean Exploratory Research Center's Second Annual Institute on St. John, Virgin Islands stimulated interest in access to the Heckler Report, and as a result of attendees petitioning representatives of the National Library of Medicine in attendance to have the full report be made readily accessible. The Office of Minority Health Resource Center partnered with the Library of Congress FedScan service and the Internet Archive to digitize the pioneering Heckler Report and made it available on June 15, 2011.

The Task Force's findings, released in 1985 as the landmark *Heckler Report*, brought minority health into the national spotlight. This year commemorates thirty years of progressively working to eliminate health disparities and advancing health equity through legislation, policy and programs.

We celebrate National Minority Health Month, 2015 with the theme *30 Years of Advancing Health Equity; The Heckler Report: A Force for Ending Health Disparities in America*," and reflect on our collective efforts to accelerate the momentum towards achieving a nation free of disparities in health and health care, and to advance health equity.

The Regional Health Equity Council for Region II (RHEC II), an initiative of the Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health's National Partnership for Action to End Health

Disparities, has joined forces with local United States Virgin Islands Stakeholders to raise awareness and call all Virgin Islanders to take action to end health disparities in the Territory.

In the forefront are the St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation and the Frederiksted Healthcare Inc., the only Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in the Virgin Islands, the Virgin Islands Department of Health, and the University of the Virgin Islands' Caribbean Exploratory Research Center.

Other Virgin Islands community stakeholder groups and individuals representing government, academia, healthcare delivery, private sector, and civic/non-profits, are all working together to end health disparities in the United States Virgin Islands by identifying health inequities and their root causes, promoting equitable opportunities to be healthy through wellness, advancing health equity legislation, policies and programs, and hosting activities and events to raise awareness.

National Minority Health Month is an inclusive initiative addressing health needs of racial and ethnic minorities, including African Americans, Hispanics, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans, and other minority groups, with the aim of strengthening the capacities of local communities to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illnesses through prevention, early detection, and control of disease complications.

Inequities begin before birth and continue throughout life, leading to unnecessary health care, social, and economic costs, as well as reductions to lifespan and quality of life; and opportunities to be healthy are hindered by income inequality and place of residence; and

Despite improvements in health and health care, and our progress towards achieving health equity, significant disparities and inequities in opportunities to be healthy persist for Virgin Islanders, such as enduring poverty and limited educational attainment. Our work is not yet done.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Governor Kenneth E. Mapp, do hereby recognize April 2015, as *Minority Health Month* in the United States Virgin Islands, and I call this observance to the attention of all Virgin Islanders, and invite you to take action towards ending health disparities in the Territory, by becoming involved and participating in the various activities and events to raise awareness throughout the month.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to be affixed at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, this 6<sup>th</sup> day of April A.D., 2015.



---

Kenneth E. Mapp  
Governor

ATTEST:

---

Osbert E. Potter  
Lieutenant Governor