

Remarks By The Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley Minister For Health And Social Development At The Press Conference For The Opening Of Ponce Health Science University School Of Medicine

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The Opening Of Ponce Health Science University School Of Medicine

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Today marks a significant milestone in the development of The Virgin Islands as we officially welcome Ponce Health Sciences University's School of Medicine to our shores. This moment is more than just the opening of an institution—it is the beginning of a new chapter in our healthcare and educational landscape. The presence of this medical school is the beginning of a tremendous opportunity for our people. It means that aspiring doctors from right here in The Virgin Islands—along those who will join us from Puerto Rico and beyond—can now

access world-class medical education without having to leave the Territory. The establishment of this medical school essentially signals our commitment to advancing medical education, utilising this as a strategy to improve our healthcare services, while simultaneously creating new opportunities for our people.

This directly aligns with our government's vision of expanding educational opportunities and strengthening our human capital in critical areas like healthcare. The impact this institution will have will be profound! This is a game-changer for our healthcare system! As we all know, The Virgin Islands, like many other regions, faces challenges such as healthcare accessibility, physician shortages, and the need for specialised medical expertise. By establishing this school of medicine right here in The Virgin Islands, we are creating a **direct** pipeline for training the next generation of doctors—doctors who will understand our Territory's unique healthcare needs and, most importantly, doctors who will have the opportunity to serve right here at home.

This partnership between PHSU and the Government of The Virgin Islands is an investment in the long-term strengthening of our healthcare sector. It will create opportunities for our young people who aspire to study medicine and enhance the overall quality of healthcare services available to our residents. Additionally, the presence of a medical school fosters an environment for continuous learning, research and clinical training components that will help improve medical standards and promote innovation within our health sector. It provides an excellent opportunity for collaborations between our local healthcare institutions and international medical experts, ultimately leading to improved patient care and advancements in medical practices within the Territory.

In addition, the presence of a medical institution in The Virgin Islands enhances our potential for health tourism, with potential specialised medical services and research opportunities, positioning this Territory as a potential leader in medical education and healthcare excellence in the region. The possibilities are endless!

I am particularly encouraged by PHSU's commitment to awarding full tuition scholarships to eligible Virgin Islanders each year, ensuring that talented students have access to world-class medical training regardless of their financial

background.

As we look ahead, we anticipate a fruitful partnership between the Government of The Virgin Islands and PHSU, one that will not only expand medical education but also enhance healthcare delivery, strengthen our medical workforce, and ultimately improve health outcomes in The Virgin Islands.

As the Minister for Health and Social Development, I wish to thank PHSU and all stakeholders who have made this possible. I extend my deepest gratitude to the individuals and organisations – local and international – who have worked tirelessly to bring this vision to life. To the founders, faculty and administrators of the medical school, we extend a warm welcome to you to The Virgin Islands, as we look forward to the incredible impact you will make in the years to come.

The launch of this medical school is just the beginning of a transformative journey – one that will shape the future of our healthcare sector, empower our people and contribute to the overall development of our beautiful Virgin Islands.

I look forward to seeing the first cohort of students excel and the long-term benefits this institution will bring to the economic landscape and healthcare offerings in our Territory. I want to encourage each of us to embrace this opportunity with open arms and work together to ensure that this institution flourishes, benefiting generations to come.

Thank you, once again, and welcome to The Virgin Islands.