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VIDE to Compensate School Lunch Workers Up to \$2,000 through American Rescue Plan for Work Performed During Pandemic

VIDE plan supersedes local legislation by Senator Sarauw calling for \$1,000 in pandemic compensation to school lunch workers

ST. THOMAS, USVI – The Virgin Islands Department of Education, in partnership with the Office of the Governor and the Office of Management and Budget, will compensate school lunch workers up to \$2,000 with federal funds received through the American Rescue Plan for work performed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The one-time payments are being processed and are on schedule to be released to employees by Jan. 31.

The Department's plan was already in place and supersedes local funding later made available through Bill No. 34-0082 (Act 8473) that called for only \$1,000 in compensation to school lunch workers. Senator Sarauw was made aware, via testimony submitted to the Finance Committee for a hearing scheduled for Sept. 21, 2021, that the Bryan-Roach Administration had plans underway to provide school lunch workers with a much more robust compensation package. As part of the Administration's plan, school lunch workers will receive compensation between \$1,250 to \$2,000, depending on their specific job title.

“The Department was able to achieve this with federal funds, made available for this purpose, to compensate school lunch workers who kept the Department running at the height of the pandemic,” said Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin. “Our school lunch workers who prepared nutritious meals for students are deserving of this compensation.”

Berry-Benjamin further pointed out that it was more financially prudent to tap into the large reserve of federal funds, rather than to draw from the GVI's general fund.

“We have access to significant amounts of federal dollars in order to recover from the pandemic, so it made better sense for us to use these funds and increase the dollar amount to employees, rather than use our limited local funds,” she said. “We appreciate the efforts of the senator and will seek to reprogram the general fund for other purposes.”

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure, and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government, and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit www.transparency.vi.gov.

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