



COPY

THE SENATE  
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
P. O. Box 500129  
Saipan, MP 96950

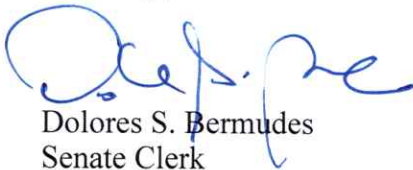
June 24, 2025

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez  
Speaker  
House of Representatives  
24<sup>th</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Speaker Villagomez:


I have the honor of transmitting for your House action **Senate Bill No. 24-04**, entitled, "To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI." The Senate passed on final reading S.B. No. 24-04 by unanimous vote, a quorum being present, in its 1st Day, Third Special Session on June 23, 2025.

Sincerely,

  
Dolores S. Bermudes  
Senate Clerk

Attachment

**Transmitted to HOUSE:**

Received by: 

Date: 6/24/2025

Time: 10:53 AM



**The Senate**  
NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE  
P.O. BOX 500129  
SAIPAN, MP 96950

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-08**  
**Date: May 08, 2025**  
**RE: Senate Bill No. 24-04**

Honorable Dennis James C. Mendiola  
President of the Senate  
Twenty-Third Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. President:

Your Committee on Health, Welfare and Programs, to which was referred Senate Bill No. 24-04, entitled:

“To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.”

begs leave to report as follows:

**I. RECOMMENDATION:**

After considerable discussion and deliberation, your Committee recommends passage of Senate Bill No. 24-04 in its current form.

**II. ANALYSIS:**

A) Purpose:

The purpose of Senate Bill No. 24-04 is to enhance the CNMI Public School System’s Chamorro and Carolinian language requirements, school personnel, and salary parity for those individuals holding Chamorro and/or Carolinian bilingual language and culture certificates.

B) Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that outlined in Article 15, Section 1(a) of the CNMI Constitution is a mandate that the educational system recognizes and preserves the unique cultural heritage and indigenous languages of the CNMI within a global context. In alignment with this, the Nineteenth CNMI Youth Congress passed Youth Congress Bill No. 19-01 on August 17, 2024, requiring all public elementary, middle, and high schools to provide at least one full year of instruction in Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages. The Youth Congress emphasized the urgency of this measure due to the declining number of fluent speakers and the importance of preserving indigenous languages to protect cultural dignity and heritage.

Your Committee finds that there have been persistent shortcomings in the CNMI Public School System's implementation of its constitutional obligations. Bilingual education programs suffer from inadequate resources, inequitable teacher compensation, and a lack of recognition for bilingual educators, some of whom earn as little as \$19,000 annually while fulfilling full-time teaching duties. Therefore, your Committee acknowledges the need for such legislation that aims to strengthen the Chamorro and Carolinian language programs by ensuring fair compensation for bilingual educators and upholding cultural preservation through equitable support in the school system.

Your Committee met on May 08, 2025, to discuss the provisions of the proposed legislation. During deliberation, your Committee discussed that the intent of the proposed legislation is to advance the Chamorro and Carolinian languages in the CNMI. Your Committee expressed that presently, many indigenous people can speak the language, however, they need the resources and programs to help in terms of teaching. It was shared that many teachers are underpaid, and there is a discrepancy in the titles of "instructor" and "teacher". It was expressed that Section 101(a) of the proposed legislation outlines that the course of instruction to be either Chamorro or Carolinian should the class be made available in considering that it may be more difficult to attain a Carolinian instructor on Tinian and Rota.

It was expressed that the difference between the proposed legislation and one that was introduced in a previous legislature is that there is no intent to transfer responsibilities because NMC and PSS are constitutionally mandated to provide the services. It was shared that there have been discussions with the NMC School of Education Director about establishing the program in terms of funds, and it was shared that there are resources available it is just a matter of packaging the program. The Committee further deliberated on the intent of the bill and disparities that are prevalent in the CNMI. It is with hope that through the proposed legislation, these disparities can be alleviated. Therefore, no member objected to the provisions offered in the proposed legislation and recommends the passage of Senate Bill No. 24-04 in its current form.

C) Legislative History:

Senate Bill No. 24-04 was formally introduced by Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro on January 22, 2025, and was subsequently referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Health, Welfare, and Programs for disposition.

During the Twenty-Third Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, a similar legislation, House Bill No. 23-55, was formally introduced by Representative Manny Gregory T. Castro and was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Education for disposition. The Committee agreed to amendments offered on the proposed legislation, which was adopted as House Bill No. 23-55, House Draft 1; and was referred to the full body of the House under Standing Committee Report No. 23-94. On December 18, 2024, the House passed House Bill No. 23-55, House Draft 1 on its Sixth Day, Fourth Regular Session. House Bill No. 23-55, House Draft 1, was transmitted to the Senate on December 18, 2024. Accordingly, House Bill No. 23-55, House Draft 1 was filed, and the Senate of the Twenty-Third Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature adjourned *sine die*.

D) Public Hearing and Comment:

1. Public Hearing. No public hearing was scheduled for Senate Bill No. 24-04. However, a committee meeting, which is open to the public, was held to receive written and oral testimonies on any proposed legislation appearing on the agenda. See below for further details.
2. Committee Meeting. The proposed legislation made its first appearance during the scheduled committee meeting on May 08, 2025, in which your Committee deliberated on the provisions stated in the proposed legislation and the comments provided to the Committee for review.

The respective Committee Meeting notices and agendas were officially posted on various legislative forums and social media sites in accordance with the Open Government Act to invite members of the general public to provide comments as indicated under Item No. III. Public Comment on the Committee Agenda. During the committee meeting, no public comments were provided on the proposed legislation.

3. Written Comment. Your Committee requested comments with a deadline to respond by April 25, 2025. To date, the status of comments received from the following government agencies is as follows:
  1. Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission *letter not dated*
  2. Luella I. Marciano, Resident Executive, Indigenous Affairs Office, *received on April 24, 2025*

E) Estimated Fiscal Cost:

The enactment of Senate Bill No. 24-04 will result in additional costs to the CNMI government to fund the implementation of the provisions within the proposed legislation. However, the academic enhancement and sustainability of the native languages of the Commonwealth outweigh any fiscal cost.

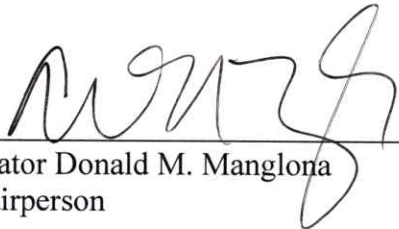
F) Summary of Committee Amendments:

Your Committee made no amendments to the proposed legislation.

**III. CONCLUSION:**

Your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of the proposed legislation and recommends passage in its current form as Senate Bill No. 24-04.

Respectfully submitted,

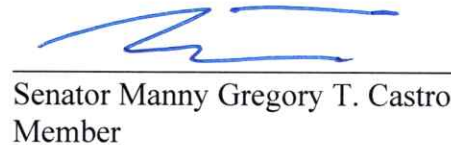
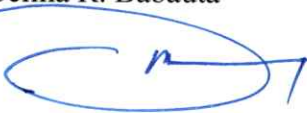


\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Donald M. Manglona  
Chairperson



\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors  
Vice Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Celina R. Babauta  
Member



\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro  
Member

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Senator Francisco Q. Cruz  
Member

Reviewed by:



\_\_\_\_\_  
Senate Legal Counsel

Attachments:

- Senate Bill No. 24-04
- Letter from Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission *letter not dated*
- Letter from Luella I. Marciano, Resident Executive, Indigenous Affairs Office, *received on April 24, 2025*

**TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

**FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2025**

**S. B. No. 24-04**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1           **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act may be cited as the “Chamorro and Carolinian  
2 Language Education Act of 2025.”

3           **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that Article 15, Section  
4 1(a) of the CNMI Constitution makes it clear that the educational system shall recognize  
5 the distinct and unique cultural heritage and indigenous way of life of the people and shall  
6 be committed to providing for the language needs of the people and the preservation of  
7 their cultural integrity within a global community.

8           On August 17, 2024, the Nineteenth CNMI Youth Congress adopted Youth  
9 Congress Bill No. 19-01, YCD 1, “To require all public schools within the CNMI:  
10 elementary, middle and high schools to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro and/or  
11 Carolinian languages.” In their findings, the Youth Congress acknowledged that there is a  
12 limited number of residents in the CNMI who fluently speak Chamorro and/or Carolinian.  
13 Further, the Youth Congress found that “[s]aving these indigenous languages is crucial to  
14 ensure the protection of the cultural dignity of our indigenous people, and safeguard our  
15 traditional heritage.”

16           The Legislature further recognizes that despite the CNMI Public School System’s  
17 (PSS) constitutional mandate to support Chamorro and Carolinian bilingual programs,  
18 resources allocated to bilingual teacher compensation, instructional contact hours, and  
19 instructional materials remain inequitable. Some bilingual teachers make as little as  
20 \$19,000 per year and are treated as teaching assistants despite performing the work of a  
21 full-time teacher, like planning lessons, developing curriculum, and leading classrooms.  
22 Therefore, it is the purpose of this Act to address issues relating to the CNMI Public School

1 System's Chamorro & Carolinian language requirements; school personnel; and salary  
2 parity for people who hold Chamorro and/or Carolinian bilingual language and culture  
3 certificates.

4 **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision  
5 Commission, the following provisions are enacted:

6 **“§ 101. Chamorro & Carolinian Language Requirements.**

7 (a) One full year of Chamorro or Carolinian language classes will be required for  
8 high school students to graduate, and middle school students to be promoted. The Public  
9 School System (PSS) shall offer at least two years of Chamorro and Carolinian language  
10 classes for those students who wish to continue instruction after the first year.

11 (b) PSS shall hire individuals who are qualified to teach either language at the level  
12 in which they are assigned. In addition to other PSS teacher qualification requirements, in  
13 order to be qualified to teach a Chamorro or Carolinian language class at PSS, the  
14 individual must hold a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture Certificate as  
15 provided in § 102.

16 (c) Chamorro and Carolinian language classes shall be counted as a foreign  
17 language credit as a prerequisite for graduation from high school. PSS shall implement  
18 Chamorro and Carolinian language classes within their curriculum by School Year 2025-  
19 26.

20 **§ 102. Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture Certificates.**

21 (a) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Northern Marianas  
22 College, shall develop a 16-week academic program specifically designed for Chamorro  
23 and/or Carolinian bilingual language and culture teachers to introduce the fundamental  
24 theories and practices of teaching and learning, educational psychology, inclusive practices  
25 for students with learning needs, instructional strategies, and classroom management,  
26 along with a comprehensive examination of the rationale and methods for curriculum  
27 planning, including integrating curriculum content through the use of thematic approaches.

28 (b) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Chamorro-Carolinian  
29 Language Policy Commission, Carolinian Affairs Office, and the Indigenous Affairs

1 Office, shall develop proficiency tests designed to assess the fluency of an individual's  
2 Chamorro and/or Carolinian language skills and their knowledge of cultural and traditional  
3 practices.

4 (c) Upon successful completion of the program described in subsection (a) along  
5 with passing the Chamorro and/or Carolinian proficiency tests described in subsection (b),  
6 the State Board of Education shall issue the successful individual a Chamorro and/or  
7 Carolinian Language and Culture Certificate. Holding a Chamorro and/or Carolinian  
8 Language and Culture Certificate indicates that the person is proficient in the Chamorro  
9 and/or Carolinian language and culture and has met the requirements stated in § 101(b) to  
10 teach Chamorro and/or Carolinian language classes at PSS. A baccalaureate degree is not  
11 required for a person to be issued a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture  
12 Certificate.

13 **§ 103. Annual Salary for Chamorro & Carolinian Teachers.**

14 Any person who receives a Chamorro and/or Carolinian language and culture  
15 certificate in accordance with § 101 shall receive a minimum annual salary equivalent to  
16 Pay Level VI, Step 03 in accordance with NMIAC § 60-30.2-215 (Alignment with PSS  
17 Classification and Salary Schedule).”

18 **Section 4. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such  
19 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent  
20 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or  
21 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

22 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not  
23 be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under  
24 statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes.  
25 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant  
26 to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any  
27 way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the  
28 date this Act becomes effective.

1           **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
2 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

Date: 01/22/25

Introduced By: /s/  
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ Jose A. Bermudes  
Senate Legal Counsel



Department of Community and Cultural Affairs  
**Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission**

Caller Box 10007 Capital Hill  
Tel: (670) 664-5321



**Honorable Members of the Senate Standing Committee on Health, Welfare & Programs**

The Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission Division respectfully submits its strong support for S.B. 24-04, a bill to advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian education in the CNMI. The Commission recognizes the vital importance of this legislation in prioritizing and strengthening the education of our indigenous languages, aligning directly with our mission to revitalize, preserve, and promote Chamorro and Carolinian for future generations.

We commend the bill's key provisions, including the mandate for language instruction in public schools, the emphasis on qualified teachers with Language and Culture Certificates, and the move towards salary parity. These measures are crucial steps in supporting language education and recognizing the essential role of our educators.

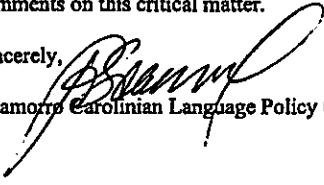
To further enhance the impact of S.B. 24-04, the Commission respectfully offers the following recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

1. **Support for Teacher Certification and Training:** The Commission offers its complete expertise and resources to collaborate with the State Board of Education and the Northern Marianas College to develop the 16-week academic program and the proficiency tests for Chamorro and Carolinian language teachers. We believe it is crucial that this program is comprehensive, culturally relevant, and equips teachers with practical and effective pedagogical skills for both languages.
2. **Resource Allocation and Curriculum Development:** The bill's success depends on the availability of high-quality teaching materials. We recommend that the legislation include provisions for dedicated funding to support the development and distribution of updated textbooks, online resources, and other materials that adhere to standardized orthographies. In consultation with the Commission, we recommend that the State Board of Education develop a comprehensive and consistent curriculum for Chamorro and Carolinian language instruction, from elementary to high school, to ensure students' cohesive and effective learning experience.
3. **Community and Cultural Integration:** The Commission suggests exploring mechanisms to integrate community members and cultural practitioners into language education programs to enhance the learning experience and foster a deeper connection to the languages. This could include inviting native speakers as guest lecturers, incorporating traditional storytelling and cultural activities into the classroom, and partnering with community organizations to allow students to use the languages in real-world settings.
4. **Salary Parity:** We strongly support the bill's provision for salary parity for certified Chamorro and Carolinian language teachers. This is a crucial step in attracting and retaining qualified teachers, ensuring the long-term success of language education programs.

5. **Long-Term Sustainability:** We encourage the Committee to consider the long-term sustainability of these language education initiatives, including provisions for ongoing funding, regular curriculum review and updates, and continued professional development opportunities for teachers.

The Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission Division is dedicated to collaborating with the Legislature and the Public School System to enhance indigenous language education in the CNMI. S.B. 24-04 could greatly benefit in preserving and promoting our valuable linguistic heritage. Therefore, we encourage the Committee to view this vital legislation favorably, considering our recommendations where suitable. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

  
Chamorro/Carolinian Language Policy Commission



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
*Indigenous Affairs Office*  
Office of the Governor



April 24, 2025

Senator Donald M. Manglona  
Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Health, Welfare & Programs  
24<sup>th</sup> Fourth Northern Mariana Commonwealth Legislature  
First Senatorial District

**RE: Submission for Comments for S.B. No. 24-04: To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian education in the CNMI.**

Håfa Ådei yan Tirow Senator Donald M. Manglona,

Please refer to my comments concerning the S.B. No. 24-04.

August 17, 2024, the Nineteenth CNMI Youth Congress adopted Youth Congress Bill No. 1-01, YCD 1, "To require all public schools within the CNMI: elementary, middle and high schools to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages."

It also states their findings, "[s]aving these indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the protection of the cultural dignity of our indigenous people, and safeguard our traditional heritage."

I am writing to advocate for the integration of Chamorro and Carolinian languages into the curriculum of all our public schools. I propose that these languages be taught daily for one full academic year.

Integrating Chamorro and Carolinian languages into our schools will ensure their preservation. Consistent study and daily application, as with any language, are crucial for improving retention and comprehension. These courses should be core requirements, not electives, to emphasize their importance in our community.

**Senate Bill No. 24-04 Section 3 line 6 Chamorro & Carolinian Language Requirements**

It is essential that the Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages are taught in all our public schools are taught one full year.

It should NOT BE considered as a foreign language. It should also NOT BE considered as an elective credit. It should be part of the curriculum and should be taught in the classroom daily in order for us to safeguard our language and our Chamorro and/or Carolinian heritage.

In order for us to fully implement the program we would need teachers to be placed in the classroom that are able to speak, use, write, understand, and teach the Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages in all public school system.

**Section 3 © line 17-18, PSS shall implement Chamorro and/or Carolinian language classes, and Chamorro and/or Carolinian Heritage within their curriculum by school by school year 25-26.**

To ensure the vitality of our Chamorro and Carolinian communities, it's imperative that our children connect with their heritage and understand the rich culture of their ancestors. The Indigenous Affairs Office, the Carolinian Affairs Office, the Chamorro and Carolinian Language Commission, and DCCA-CCAC are collaborating to involve cultural practitioners, artists, and oracles in demonstrating and facilitating our Chamorro and Carolinian culture. Given the increasing demand for cultural practitioners in the classroom, integrating our Chamorro and Carolinian heritage into the curriculum is essential.

In addition to recognizing our CCHLS teachers for certification, we are also exploring opportunities to certify our Cultural Practitioners, formally acknowledging their expertise. This initiative marks a key step in advancing indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian education in the CNMI, as these cultural practitioners are uniquely positioned to teach our heritage. Practitioners can also gain certifications through apprenticeships with recognized Cultural Practitioners in the CNMI. Heritage Specialist Qualifications should also be considered in vocational or college level for our people.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase meh ghilissou.

Sincerely,



Luella I. Marciano  
Resident Executive Indigenous Affairs Office