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

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-82
Date: March 18, 2026
RE: House Bill No. 24-10

Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President of the Senate
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mister President:

Your Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law, to which was referred House Bill No. 24-10, entitled:

"To establish change of name legal procedure in the CNMI."

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion and deliberation, your Committee recommends passage of House Bill No. 24-10 in its current form.

II. ANALYSIS:

A) Purpose:

The purpose of House Bill No. 24-10 is to establish a standardized legal procedure for name changes in the CNMI, providing a clear court process for adults while ensuring safeguards against fraud and enabling recognition of approved changes in official records.

B) Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands currently lacks a standardized legal procedure for adult name changes, as existing law only addresses name changes in the context of adoption and permits amendments to birth certificates upon receipt of a court order without outlining a general process. This gap has created uncertainty for residents seeking name changes for legitimate personal, cultural, or professional reasons. The Legislature further finds that other jurisdictions provide clear and transparent court procedures that ensure due process while preventing fraud and misuse. Therefore, establishing a comprehensive, court-supervised name change process is necessary to provide clarity, protect individual rights, ensure consistency in legal recognition, and safeguard against fraudulent or unlawful name changes.

Your Committee met on March 18, 2026 to discuss the provisions of the proposed legislation. The Committee shared that the Judiciary supports the proposed legislation and absent any statute specifying the standards for name change, its implementation would establish a uniform and organized process for the court to address petitions for name change. Therefore, no member objected to the passage of House Bill No. 24-10 in its current form.

C) Legislative History:

House Bill No. 24-10 was formally introduced by Representative Joel C. Camacho on March 07, 2025 and was referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations. On July 25, 2025, the House JGO Committee adopted the proposed legislation in its original form, which was reported to the full body of the House of Representatives under House Standing Committee Report (SCR) No. 24-24. On August 29, 2025, during its Second Day, Second Regular Session, House SCR 24-24 was adopted, and the House of Representatives passed the proposed legislation in the form of House Bill No. 24-10 on first and final reading. On September 02, 2025 House Bill No. 24-10 was transmitted to the Senate. On September 29, 2025, House Bill No. 24-10 was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Government an d Law for disposition.

D) Public Hearing and Comment:

1. Public Hearing. No public hearing was scheduled for House Bill No. 24-10. 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 March 18, 2026 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 of the Committee Agenda. During the committee meeting, no public comments were provided on the proposed legislation.

3. Written Comment. No written comments on the proposed legislation were officially received by the Committee.

E) Estimated Fiscal Cost:

The enactment of House Bill No. 24-10 will result in additional costs to the CNMI government as it establishes a name change process managed by the court that can be handled within existing resources. However, the proposed legislation allows for the courts to establish a reasonable filing fee which may offset any minor administrative costs for processing petitions and updating records.

F) Summary of Committee Amendments:

Your Committee agreed that no further amendments were needed.

III. CONCLUSION:

Your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of the proposed legislation and recommends the passage of House Bill No. 24-10 in its current form.

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Donald M. Manglona
Chairperson

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro
Vice Chairperson

Senator Celina R. Babauta
Member

Senator Ronnie M. Calvo
Member

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz
Member

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider
Member

Reviewed by:

Senate Legal Counsel

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 11, 2025

First Regular Session, 2025 **H. B. 24-10**

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To establish a change of name legal procedure in the CNMI.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24TH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose. The Legislature finds that the CNMI currently lacks a standardized procedure for legally changing a person's name. While the Commonwealth Code provides a name change procedure within the context of adoption and grants the Commonwealth's Registrar of Vital Statistics the authority to amend a birth certificate upon receipt of a certified court order for a name change, the Code does not establish a general process applicable to adults seeking a legal name change outside of these circumstances.

The absence of a general name change procedure has led to uncertainty for residents seeking to change their names for legitimate personal, cultural, or professional reasons. The Legislature recognizes that other jurisdictions provide straightforward and transparent legal mechanisms for individuals to petition the court for a name change, ensuring due process while preventing fraud and misuse.

To address this gap, this Act establishes a legal procedure for name changes in the CNMI. The process balances the petitioner's right to a name change with safeguards to prevent fraudulent or unlawful name changes. This Act also ensures that court-approved name changes are legally recognized for purposes of updating government-issued identification and official records. By enacting this legislation, the Commonwealth strengthens access to legal name changes while maintaining judicial oversight and procedural safeguards to protect public and private interests.

Thus, the purpose of this Act is to establish a change of name legal procedure in the CNMI.

Section 2. Enactment. There is hereby enacted a new Chapter 12 within Title 8, Division 1 of the Commonwealth Code to read as follows:

"Chapter 12. Change of Name

§ 101. Change of Name Petition

(a) Any CNMI resident who wishes to obtain an official court-recognized name change may file a petition with the CNMI Superior Court.

(b) The petition shall be in writing, signed by the petitioner, and shall include the following:

(1) The petitioner's current legal name, date of birth, place of birth, and residence;

(2) The name the petitioner proposes to assume; and

(3) A declaration, made under penalty of perjury, that the

petitioner is not seeking the name change for any fraudulent or unlawful purpose, to mislead or deceive others, to evade legal obligations, or to interfere with the rights of others.

(c) The CNMI Supreme Court may establish standard petition forms and set a reasonable filing fee for change of name petitions. A petitioner who is indigent may request a fee waiver.

§ 102. Public Notice Requirement

(a) Unless waived by the court for good cause, a petitioner must publish a notice of the proposed name change at least twice in a newspaper of general circulation in the CNMI. The publications must occur at least 7 days apart. The first publication shall be made at least 30 days before the hearing on the change of name of petition, and the second publication shall be made at least 14 days before the hearing. The notice shall include the following:

(1) The petitioner's current legal name;

(2) The name the petitioner proposes to assume;

(3) A statement that the petition has been filed with the CNMI Superior Court, including the case number, if applicable;

(4) The date, time, and location of the scheduled hearing on the change of name petition;

(5) A statement that any person may file an objection with the court before the scheduled hearing if they believe the name change is

being sought for any fraudulent or unlawful purpose, to mislead or deceive others, to evade legal obligations, or to interfere with the rights of others; and

(6) Instructions on where and how to submit objections, including the address of the CNMI Superior Court and the deadline for filing.

(b) The petitioner shall file proof of publication with the court prior to the scheduled hearing date. Failure to provide proof of publication may result in dismissal of the petition. The court may waive this proof of publication requirement for good cause.

(c) Any person with an objection to the change of name petition may file a written opposition with the court before the scheduled hearing.

§ 103. Judicial Review and Hearing

(a) The court shall conduct a hearing on the change of name petition and consider whether the name is being sought for any fraudulent or unlawful purpose, to mislead or deceive others, to evade legal obligations, or to interfere with the rights of others.

(b) The discretion of a CNMI Superior Court judge over a change of name petition shall be exercised on the basis of evidence and not conclusory assertions. The court shall not deny a change of name petition based solely on speculative or subjective concerns.

(c) The court shall grant the change of name petition if no substantial

evidence exists that the name change is sought for any fraudulent or unlawful purpose, to mislead or deceive others, to evade legal obligations, or to interfere with the rights of others.

§ 104. Court Order and Legal Effect

(a) If the court grants a change of name petition, it shall issue an order officially recognizing the new name.

(b) The petitioner may use the court order to update their legal documents, including identification cards, birth certificates, and other official records.

(c) An order granting a change of name petition is a final judgment subject to appeal; provided, such appeal is made to the CNMI Supreme Court within 30 days of its issuance."

Section 3. Severability. If any provisions of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

Section 4. Savings Clause. This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted

under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

Section 5. Effective Date. This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor, or it becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 3/7/2025

Date: _____ Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Joel C. Camacho
/s/ Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao
/s/ Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez
/s/ Rep. Julie M.A. Ogo
/s/ Rep. Ralph N. Yumul

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

/s/ Joseph M. Hallahan
House Legal Counsel

Date: 3/7/2025