



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS

P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

JOEL CAMACHO
CHAIRMAN

Adopted - 8/25/2025

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-24

DATE: July 25, 2025

RE: House Bill 24-10

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations to which was referred:

House Bill No. 24-10: "To establish a change of name legal procedure in the CNMI."

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that House Bill No. 24-10 be passed by the House in its current form.

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of House Bill No. 24-10 is to establish a clear, fair, and standardized legal process in the CNMI for adults to legally change their names.

TO THE CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*
DATE 8/25/2025 TIME 8:15 AM

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that the CNMI currently lacks a standardized process for legally changing one's name. While the Commonwealth Code allows for name changes in the context of adoption and authorizes the Registrar of Vital Statistics to amend a birth certificate upon receiving a court order, there is no general procedure for adults who wish to change their names outside of these circumstances. This lack of procedure has caused uncertainty for residents that seek to change their names for personal, cultural, or professional reasons. Your Committee also recognizes that other jurisdictions provide straightforward and transparent legal mechanisms that allow individuals to petition the court for a name change, ensuring due process while preventing fraud and misuse.

Your Committee finds that House Bill No. 24-10 establishes a legal procedure for name changes in the CNMI. The process under House Bill No. 24-10 balances an individual's right to change their name with safeguards against unlawful or fraudulent actions. It further ensures that court-approved name changes are duly recognized by the CNMI government. By enacting this legislation, the CNMI expands access to legal name changes while both preserving judicial oversight and protecting public and private interests.

C. Public Comments/Public Hearing:

The following entities were invited to present written and/or oral testimony on the day of the committee meeting:

- NMI Judiciary
- CNMI Department of Public Safety
- Office of the Attorney General

Your Committee received comments from the following:

- Honorable Alexandro C. Castro, Chief Justice, and Honorable Roberto C. Naraja, Presiding Judge, NMI Judiciary. Comments dated July 23, 2025.

“We fully support the passage of House Bill 24-10 to establish a change of name legal procedure in the CNMI.”

Comments received have been attached as part of the committee report.

D. Legislative History:

On March 11, 2025, Representative Joel C. Camacho introduced House Bill No. 24-10. On that same date, House Bill No. 24-10 was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations for disposition.

E. Cost Benefit:

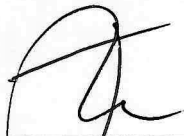
House Bill No. 24-10 is not expected to impose additional costs on the CNMI government. It establishes a legal procedure for name changes that relies on court filings, public notices, and a hearing process—all of which fall within the Judiciary’s existing functions. The bill also does not create new administrative positions nor does it require significant infrastructure investments.

Any potential expenses are limited to routine court processing, which can be covered by existing filing fees. The authorization of fee waivers for indigent petitioners will reduce potential revenue, but the measure can still be implemented with existing resources and is expected to have a minimal budgetary effect.

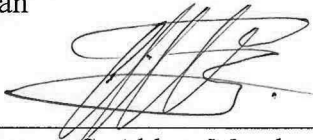
III. CONCLUSION:

Based on the foregoing, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 24-10 and recommends its passage.

Respectfully submitted,

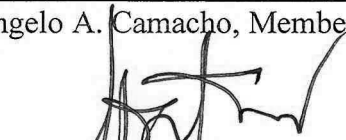


Rep. Joel C. Camacho,
Chairman

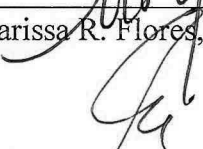


Rep. Vincent S. Aldan, Member

Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member



Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Member

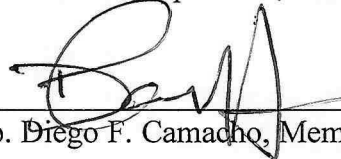


Rep. Julie A. Ogo, Member



Rep. Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao,
Vice Chairman

Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Member

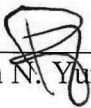


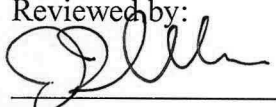
Rep. Diego F. Camacho, Member

Rep. Joseph A. Flores, Member

Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Member




Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, Member

Reviewed by:

House Legal Counsel

Date: 8/21/2025



The
JUDICIARY
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

SUPREME COURT

P.O. Box 502165 • Saipan, MP 96950
Guma' Hustisia • Susupe
Tel: (670) 236-9709 • Fax: (670) 236-9702
Website: www.NMIJudiciary.gov

ALEXANDRO C. CASTRO
Chief Justice
ACCastro@NMIJudiciary.gov

July 23, 2025

Chairman Joel C. Camacho
Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations
24th Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500586
Saipan, MP 96950

Re: Judiciary Comments on House Bill Nos. 24-10, 24-26, 24-28, and 24-39

Dear Chairman Camacho:

We write in response to your letter requesting for comments on House Bill Nos. 24-10, 24-26, 24-28, and 24-39. Keeping with past practice, the Judiciary will submit comments or recommendations on proposed legislation that directly affects the functions and operations of the third branch of government. Please see our comments below:

House Bill 24-10 [Change of Name]:

We fully support the passage of House Bill 24-10 to establish a change of name legal procedure in the CNMI. Currently, there is no statute specifying the standards for a name change. The proposed legislation will establish a uniform and organized process for the court to address petitions for name change.

House Bill 24-26 [Child Abuse Amendment]:

We will refrain from commenting on House Bill 23-26, as it involves legally substantive amendments to the definition of the crime of child abuse. The Judiciary commenting on substantive changes to the law undermines judicial neutrality and affects our ability to fairly adjudicate related issues. Additionally, courts are prohibited from advocating for or against any particular issue.

House Bill 24-28 [Grand Jury System]:

While we support the Legislature's efforts to strengthen the justice system, the Judiciary has some concerns regarding the practicality of implementing the grand jury system.

The CNMI struggles with persistent and recurring fiscal challenges. Year after year, including the current fiscal period, the Judiciary remains significantly under-funded and is now facing additional efforts to further reduce its funding. The court will be burdened with added expenditure such as

juror fees, administrative and personnel costs, and courtroom security should the bill move forward. In other words, it is crucial for the Legislature to establish an appropriate funding source to ensure the viability of the grand jury system, or else, it will not work.

Also, given the CNMI's limited population, the court may encounter significant challenges collecting an adequate and impartial pool of grand jurors. Further, there is an existing mechanism in place—preliminary examination under Rule 5.1 of the NMI Rules of Criminal Procedure, which provides for checks against unfair prosecution. Establishing a grand jury system may lead to overlapping use of judicial resources and efforts.

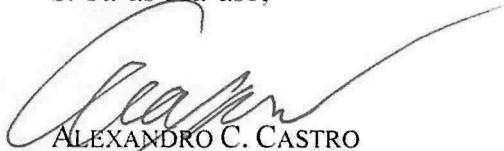
To adequately address these concerns and explore the feasibility of a grand jury system in the CNMI, we propose the establishment of an ad hoc committee composed of representatives from the Judiciary, the Office of the Attorney General, the Public Defender's Office, and the Legislature.

House Bill 24-39 [Treatment Program Enforcement Officers]:

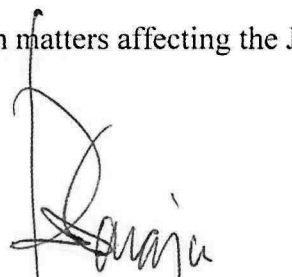
We fully support the passage of House Bill 24-39 to establish Treatment Program Enforcement Officers within the Judiciary. Enforcement and supervision of participants are essential components of a successful treatment court program. These officers supervise participants, conduct home and work visits, perform drug testing, monitor compliance, and make arrests, as necessary, delivering rehabilitative justice, preserving public safety, and maintaining officer accountability.

We look forward to continuing to work with your office on matters affecting the Judiciary and the law in this 24th Commonwealth Legislature.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase,



ALEXANDRO C. CASTRO
Chief Justice



ROBERTO C. NARAÑA
Presiding Judge

cc: Associate Justice John A. Manglona
Associate Justice Perry B. Inos
Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo
Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho
Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio
Associate Judge Lillian A. Tenorio

JG10-3/11/2025

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 11, 2025

1st Reg., 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:**

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.**

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

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

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

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

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

12 **"Chapter 12. Change of Name**

13 **§ 101. Change of Name Petition**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 **§ 102. Public Notice Requirement**

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

- 15 (1) The petitioner's current legal name;
- 16 (2) The name the petitioner proposes to assume;
- 17 (3) A statement that the petition has been filed with the CNMI Superior
18 Court, including the case number, if applicable;
- 19 (4) The date, time, and location of the scheduled hearing on the change
20 of name petition;
- 21 (5) A statement that any person may file an objection with the court

1 before the scheduled hearing if they believe the name change is
2 being sought for any fraudulent or unlawful purpose, to mislead or
3 deceive others, to evade legal obligations, or to interfere with the
4 rights of others; and

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

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

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

13 **§ 103. Judicial Review and Hearing**

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

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

1 (c) The court shall grant the change of name petition if no substantial
2 evidence exists that the name change is sought for any fraudulent or
3 unlawful purpose, to mislead or deceive others, to evade legal
4 obligations, or to interfere with the rights of others.

5 **§ 104. Court Order and Legal Effect**

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

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

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

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

19 **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein
20 shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or
21 acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted

1 under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding
2 instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have
3 the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal,
4 which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.


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

Filed: 3/17/2025

Date: _____

Introduced by: _____
Rep. Joel C. Camacho

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:



House Legal Counsel

