



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 - 8/29/2025
STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-25
DATE: July 25, 2025
RE: House Bill 24-26

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. 24-26: "To amend the crime of child abuse."

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that House Bill No. 24-26 be passed by the House in its current form.

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of the Act is to expand the definition of child abuse in the CNMI to include conduct that places a child in imminent danger through the use, presence, or exposure to methamphetamine.

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

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that methamphetamine abuse is a serious problem in the CNMI, particularly because of the severe risks it poses to children. Children can be harmed through direct exposure, secondhand absorption, or by being born to mothers who use the drug during pregnancy. To address these dangers, this Act expands the definition of child abuse to include conduct that places a child in imminent danger due to the presence, use, manufacture, or possession of methamphetamine. Specifically, the Act clarifies that using methamphetamine in a child's presence—or causing methamphetamine to be present in a child's system—constitutes child abuse.

Your Committee finds that this legislation is necessary to strengthen legal protections for children and ensure the law accurately protects the well-documented harms of methamphetamine exposure. Many jurisdictions already recognize such conduct as a criminal offense, and this Act aligns CNMI law with those standards to better safeguard the welfare of minors.

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

The 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 will refrain from commenting on House Bill 23-26, (sic) as it involves legally substantive amendments to the definition of the crime of child abuse.”

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

D. Legislative History:

On April 24, 2025, Representative Malcolm J. Omar introduced House Bill No. 24-26, which was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations for disposition on that same day.

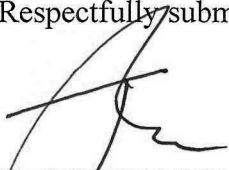
E. Cost Benefit:

The enactment of House Bill 24-26 will not result in additional costs to the CNMI government. The bill updates existing laws to strengthen protections for children against methamphetamine-related harm and will be managed within current judicial and law enforcement resources. The changes primarily involve clarifying legal definitions and conduct, which do not require new personnel, infrastructure, or significant administrative expenses. Overall, implementation will operate within existing budgets, making it a cost-neutral measure for the government.

III. CONCLUSION:

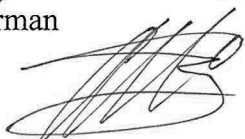
The committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 24-26 and recommends its passage.

Respectfully submitted,




Rep. Joel C. Camacho,
Chairman

Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao,
Vice Chairman

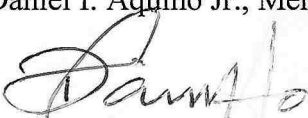


Rep. Vincent S. Aldan, Member

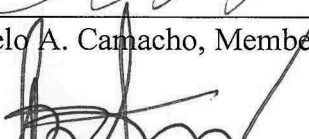
Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Member



Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member




Rep. Diego F. Camacho, Member




Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Member

Rep. Joseph A. Flores, Member

Rep. Julie A. Ogo, Member

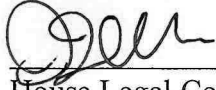


Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Member



Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, Member

Reviewed by:



House Legal Counsel

Date: 8/19/25

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 24, 2025

1st Spec

Regular Session, 2025

H. B. 24-26

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To amend the crime of child abuse.

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

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose:** The purpose of the Act is to amend the
 2 crime of child abuse to include conduct that places a child in imminent danger
 3 through the presence of methamphetamine. The Act specifies that ingesting
 4 methamphetamine in the presence of a child or resulting in the presence of
 5 methamphetamine in a child is included in the definition of child abuse.

6 The illegal drug methamphetamine is commonly abused in the CNMI.
 7 Unfortunately, if ingested in the presence of children, that exposure is dangerous
 8 because children can absorb the drug and the person using the drug may harm the
 9 child. In addition, pregnant women who use methamphetamine pass the drug on to
 10 their child, endangering the health of that child.

11 Many jurisdictions have made endangering a child an offense if the person
 12 uses methamphetamine in the presence of a child or if a newly born child tests

1 positive for methamphetamine. This Act adds that protection to the children of the
2 CNMI as well.

3 **Section 2. Amendment.** Title 6, Division 5, Chapter 3, Article 1 § 5312.
4 Child Abuse: Defined, of the Commonwealth Code is amended by amending
5 subsection (a) to read as follows:

6 “(a) A person commits the offense of child abuse if the person:

7 [1-3 unchanged]

8 (4) knowingly or recklessly, by act or omission, engages in conduct
9 that endangers a child younger than 18 years by:

10 (i) manufacturing, possessing, or in any way introducing into
11 the body of any person the controlled substance methamphetamine
12 in the presence of the child; or

13 (ii) any conduct establishing the proximity or accessibility of
14 the controlled substance methamphetamine to the child and an
15 analysis of a specimen of the child's blood, urine, or other bodily
16 substance indicates the presence of methamphetamine in the child's
17 body.”

18 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of
19 any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court
20 of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its

1 provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid
2 shall not be affected thereby.

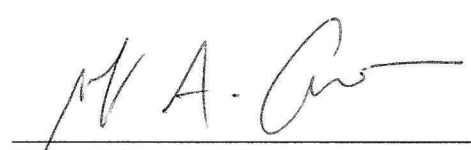
3 **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein
4 shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or
5 acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted
6 under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding
7 instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have
8 the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal,
9 which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

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


Prefiled: 4/16/2025

Date: _____

Introduced by: _____


Rep. Malcolm J. Omar

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:


House Legal Counsel

Date: 4-16-25