



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE

P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

THOMAS JOHN "TJ" DELA CRUZ MANGLONA
CHAIRMAN

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-40

DATE: October 14, 2025

RE: House Bill No. 24-34

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 Commerce to which was referred:

House Bill No. 24-34: To streamline business licensing in the Commonwealth by establishing a business startup task force, a digital one-stop platform, a support center, and a conditional business licensing process.

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion, your committee recommends that House Bill No. 24-34, be passed by the House in its current form.

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of this Act is to simplify business licensing in the Commonwealth through a startup task force, a digital platform, support center, and streamlined licensing process.

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DATE 11/15/2025 5:15 PM TIME

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that the current business licensing and permitting processes in CNMI are highly inefficient, fragmented, and outdated, relying heavily on manual, paper-based procedures across multiple agencies. Despite efforts under Public Law 12-76 to establish a “One-Stop Business License Application Center,” no unified digital system was created, leaving entrepreneurs to navigate complex, time-consuming, and confusing procedures that hinder business formation and economic development. The absence of a central online platform prevents real-time application tracking, reduces transparency, and limits access for remote or underserved applicants, further delaying necessary approvals and economic activity.

Your Committee also finds that the establishment of the CNMI Business Start-Up Coordination Task Force and the Digital OneStop Platform represents a vital step toward modernizing the licensing system. By consolidating all agency requirements into a single online interface, providing real-time status updates, and enabling online payments, the new system reduces administrative burdens and streamlines approvals. The addition of a Help Center ensures equitable access, and the introduction of conditional business licenses allows startups to commence limited operations during review delays, fostering economic growth while maintaining regulatory oversight. Together, these measures establish a robust foundation for a transparent, efficient, and inclusive licensing environment.

C. Public Comments/Public Hearing:

On July 21, 2025, the Committee received comments from the following:

- Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary of Commerce, Department of Commerce - Written comment:

“This bill moves in a direction the CNMI Department of Commerce strongly supports. We’ve recognized that new and small businesses face unnecessary delays when navigating our licensing system, especially when dealing with multiple agencies. Creating a coordinated system backed by digital tools and direct support services would be a welcome improvement.”

On July 31, 2025, the Committee received comments from the following:

- Derek T. Sasamoto, Executive Director, Commonwealth Economic Development Authority - Written comment:

“We agree with this bill’s intent to have the Department of Commerce lead this effort given they are the regulatory arm. We suggest officially transferring the business license function to the Department of Commerce from the Department of Finance to further streamline the business application process.”

On August 1, 2025, the Committee received comments from the following:

- Honorable Aubry M. Hocog, Mayor of the Municipality of Rota - Written comment:

“I am writing on behalf of the Municipality of Rota to convey our unwavering support for House Bill No. 24-34, the “CNMI OneStop Business Start-Up Act.” This legislation is a critical initiative poised to modernize and significantly improve the business environment across our islands.”

Written comments received have been attached as part of this committee report.

D. Legislative History:

On July 14, 2025, House Bill No. 24-34 was introduced by Representative Thomas John “TJ” DLC. Manglona and was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Commerce for disposition.

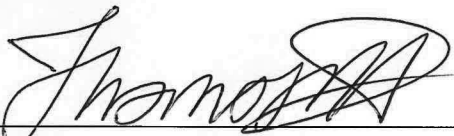
E. Cost Benefit:

The enactment of House Bill No. 24-34 will likely result in minimal costs to the CNMI government, primarily due to the transition from a fragmented, paper-based licensing system to a centralized digital platform. While initial expenditures will be needed for platform development, procurement, and staff training, these costs are offset by long-term savings achieved through increased efficiency, reduced manual processing, and decreased administrative burdens. The creation of the OneStop Business Start-Up Fund and the collection of application fees will support ongoing maintenance and updates, further reducing fiscal strain on government resources. Additionally, streamlining licensing processes and enabling conditional business licenses can foster economic growth and attract new businesses, generating indirect revenue benefits. Overall, the investment in modern digital infrastructure is expected to outweigh costs, providing a cost-effective solution for improving government operations and promoting economic activity in the CNMI.

III. CONCLUSION:

The committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 24-34 and recommends its passage on First and Final Reading.


Respectfully submitted,



Rep. Thomas John "TJ" DLC. Manglona
Chairman



Rep. Roy A. Ada, Member




Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao, Member

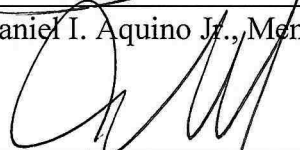


Rep. Malcolm J. Omar, Member


Rep. Julie M. A. Ogo
Vice Chairwoman



Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Member



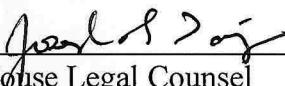
Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member



Rep. Raymond U. Palacios, Member

Rep. Patrick H. San Nicolas, Member

Reviewed by:



House Legal Counsel

Date: 10-20-25

Attachments:

- House Bill No. 24-34, Prefiled July 3, 2025
- Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary, Department of Commerce, letter dated July 21, 2025
- Derek T. Sasamoto, Executive Director, Commonwealth Economic Development Authority, letter dated July 31, 2025
- Honorable Aubry M. Hocog, Mayor of the Municipality of Rota, letter dated August 1, 2025



Arnold I. Palacios, Governor
David M. Apatang, Lt. Governor

Department of Commerce
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
P.O. Box 5795 CHRB, Saipan, MP 96950
Website: <https://commerce.gov.mp/>
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Telephone: (670) 664-3000



Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary

July 21, 2025

Hon. Thomas John "TJ" Dela Cruz Manglona
Chairman, House Standing Committee on Commerce
24th Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Subject: Comment Submission on HB 24-34 – Streamlining Business Licensing

Dear Chairman Manglona,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 24-34, which aims to improve the business licensing process in the Commonwealth by establishing a startup task force, launching a centralized digital platform, and creating a conditional licensing option for new applicants.

This bill moves in a direction the CNMI Department of Commerce strongly supports. We've recognized that new and small businesses face unnecessary delays when navigating our licensing system, especially when dealing with multiple agencies. Creating a coordinated system backed by digital tools and direct support services would be a welcome improvement.


That said, we respectfully raise the following points for consideration:

- *Defined Roles Across Agencies:* To avoid confusion and delays, the responsibilities of each agency involved in licensing should be outlined clearly within the bill or its implementing rules. Having a point of accountability is key to moving this forward.
- *Resources and Support:* While the concept is solid, building and maintaining a digital one-stop system will require proper investment in both personnel and infrastructure. We will need additional staffing to run the proposed support center and ensure the system is reliable.
- *Conditional Licenses:* This feature could help get new ventures off the ground faster, but guardrails are necessary. We suggest language that allows for oversight and revocation in cases of public health or safety violations.

- *Implementation Timeline:* A phased rollout, perhaps starting with a pilot program or single-sector focus, might help identify potential issues early without disrupting current services.

In short, HB 24-34 introduces long-needed solutions. With some operational details clarified and support for implementation, this bill could ease the path for many of our aspiring business owners.

Sincerely,



Remedio C. Mafnas
Secretary of Commerce



CEDA



RECEIVED
DATE 7/31/25 MP

July 31, 2025

The Honorable Thomas John DLC Mangloña
Chairman, House Standing Committee on Commerce
House of Representatives
24th CNMI Legislature
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

RE: **Senate Bill No. 24-31 SD1, entitled “To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell low-risk, non-perishable foods nontime/temperature control (TCS) for safety food and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.”**
House Bill 24-34, entitled “To streamline business licensing in the Commonwealth by establishing a business startup task force, a digital one-stop platform, a support center, and a conditional business licensing process.”

Dear Chairman Manglona:

Senate Bill 24-31—Short Title “Cottage Food and Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations Act of 2025.” The intent of the bill would allow small businesses to produce and sell certain foods from a residential location. CEDA supports all initiatives that properly promote the entrepreneurial spirit and the development of small businesses. Developing the private sector is of vital importance for any economy.

Observations:

- i. The bill may need to define “non-perishable foods” as on page 1, line 12, the term is stuck out in favor of “non-TCS” foods. Yet on page 2, line 27, non-perishable foods are listed as “Permitted Foods.” Moreover, some of the food items listed in this section seem to be perishable such as cakes, bread, and pastries, for example. Details such as this need to be clearly defined.
- ii. Monitoring, verification, and enforcement – these activities need to be clearly defined, as well. How will EHDP verify that the list of ingredients is accurate, that the ingredients used were safe/sanitary, that the items were actually made in the home kitchen, the production date, and who will determine the allergens that may exist? Can anyone make this claim, or must this claim be verified? How will EHDP verify the sales threshold, the meals per day, and that leftovers are not being sold?

- iii. The use of the word “may” in terms of the regulations and requirements is unclear. It gives the impression that adherence to the rules can be an option.
- iv. Enforcement and Penalties – the bill states that EHDP “may” conduct inspections. The inspection should be mandatory on a yearly basis at minimum.


House Bill 24-34—Short Title “CNMI OneStop Business Start-Up Act.”

Observations:

- i. We agree with this bill’s intent to have the Department of Commerce lead this effort given they are the regulatory arm. We suggest officially transferring the business license function to the Department of Commerce from the Department of Finance to further streamline the business application process.
- ii. Add CEDA as a participant to the task force. Though CEDA is not involved in such regulatory matters, its input on matters affecting the business and investment environment are crucial.
- iii. The initial funding for the effort must be identified. It states Commerce will be responsible for implementation and procurement, but it does not identify how this will be funded.
- iv. Exemptions from the online platform fees – these fees should be mandatory. An exemption due to financial hardship for required licenses and permits seems unreasonable as a viable business should be reasonably responsible, and capable, of covering its establishment costs. Moreover, government agencies must recover their costs of administering programs to maintain and improve those programs. Fee for service should not be ignored.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on, and collaborate on, such vital initiatives.

Respectfully,



Derek T. Sasamoto
Executive Director

xc: CEDA Board of Directors
Executive Assistant

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DATE: 8/1/25 km



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

THE HONORABLE AUBRY MANGLONA HOCOG

Mayor of the Municipality of Rota
Mailing Address: Post Office Box 537 Rota, MP 96951



MOR-2025-257

August 1, 2025

The Honorable Members
House Standing Committee on Commerce
24th Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

SUBJECT: Endorsement of House Bill No. 24-34: The CNMI OneStop Business Start-Up Act

Dear Distinguished Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Municipality of Rota to convey our unwavering support for House Bill No. 24-34, the "CNMI OneStop Business Start-Up Act." This legislation is a critical initiative poised to modernize and significantly improve the business environment across our islands.

We understand that the intent of HB 24-34 is to fundamentally streamline the business licensing and permitting processes within the Commonwealth as it proposes the establishment of a centralized Digital One Stop Platform, a dedicated Business Start-Up Help Center, and a new conditional business licensing process. We are in agreement that this measure will eliminate the current inefficiencies, fragmentation, and delays that hinder new business formation and growth, ultimately fostering a more transparent, accessible, and efficient system for all entrepreneurs in the CNMI.

We believe this bill will be instrumental in reducing administrative burdens, lowering operating costs for new ventures, and encouraging economic diversification. The provisions for a unified digital interface and in-person support will ensure that all applicants, including those in remote areas like Rota or with limited digital literacy, can navigate the system with greater ease.

We respectfully urge the Committee's favorable consideration and swift passage of House Bill No. 24-34. Its enactment will be a transformative step towards a more dynamic and prosperous business landscape in the CNMI.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aubry M. Hocog".

Aubry M. Hocog

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Special Session, 2025

H. B. 24-34

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To streamline business licensing in the Commonwealth by establishing a business start-up task force, a digital one-stop platform, a support center, and a conditional business licensing process.

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

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be known as the “CNMI OneStop
2 Business Start-Up Act.”

3 **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** Under current CNMI law, business
4 licensing and permitting processes are administered separately by various
5 regulatory agencies. Applicants are required to obtain approvals and submit
6 paperwork across multiple offices, often necessitating repeated in-person visits.
7 The system relies heavily on paper-based forms and manual coordination, with no
8 centralized digital platform to guide applicants or track permit statuses.

9 The Legislature acknowledges that an effort to address these challenges was
10 undertaken through Public Law 12-76, which established a Business Application
11 Task Force. Under that enactment, the Task Force was mandated to develop a

1 comprehensive plan for the creation of a “One-Stop Business License Application
2 Center,” with the participation of representatives from all pertinent licensing
3 agencies. The Task Force was further directed to review existing procedures,
4 conduct public hearings, and assess the feasibility of implementing a centralized
5 electronic processing system via an online platform. Notwithstanding these
6 directives, no unified online platform was established. Moreover, although Public
7 Law 12-76 required the submission of formal recommendations to the Governor
8 and the Legislature within ninety days, it appears that no substantive progress was
9 achieved. Indeed, while it is possible that documentation was at some point
10 prepared, it cannot be located or independently verified at this time.

11 Despite the intent of Public Law 12-76, the core challenges it sought to
12 resolve persist. The Legislature finds that the existing licensing and permitting
13 framework remains inefficient, fragmented, and outdated. Entrepreneurs and small
14 business owners face considerable delays and confusion when navigating different
15 agency requirements, with no single access point to understand or fulfill all
16 necessary obligations. This disjointed process increases administrative burdens,
17 operating costs, and discourages new business formation. The lack of digital
18 infrastructure prevents real-time tracking, hinders transparency, and limits access
19 for those operating remotely or outside of the CNMI. Additionally, without a
20 formalized process for conditional business licensing, businesses are unable to

1 begin operations while awaiting final approvals—creating unnecessary delays and
2 economic opportunity loss.

3 To address these issues, this Act repeals and replaces the “Business License
4 Application Task Force” with the “CNMI Business Start-Up Coordination Task
5 Force” and mandates the creation of a comprehensive, centralized digital
6 platform—referred to as the “Digital OneStop Platform.” In addition to
7 streamlining application procedures, this Act also introduces a mechanism for
8 conditional business operation during the permit review period, enabling applicants
9 to begin limited business operation activities.

10 The CNMI Business Start-Up Coordination Task Force, established under
11 the Office of the Governor and chaired by the Secretary of Commerce, includes
12 representatives from all CNMI government entities involved in business licensing,
13 permitting, or regulatory approvals. It is responsible for overseeing the design,
14 development, and implementation of the Digital OneStop Platform; coordinating
15 interagency requirements; standardizing procedures; and ensuring continuous
16 collaboration and system improvement. Its establishment formalizes interagency
17 coordination, promotes transparency, and ensures that the digital licensing system
18 evolves through structured oversight and stakeholder engagement.

19 The Digital OneStop Platform consolidates all business licensing and
20 permitting requirements into a single online interface. It provides access to required
21 forms, tracks the status of applications, enables online payments, and allows users

1 to view agency feedback and deadlines in real-time. Additionally, it addresses the
2 inefficiencies of the current system by consolidating fragmented agency processes
3 into a unified digital platform, thereby eliminating the need for multiple physical
4 visits and manual submissions. The digital platform does not replace or override
5 the statutory authority of agencies but instead consolidates agency application
6 procedures into a centralized, transparent, and accessible interface administered by
7 the Department of Commerce.

8 To support users navigating the Digital OneStop Platform, the “CNMI
9 Business Start-Up Help Center” is established within the Department of
10 Commerce. The Help Center operates as a physical service location and
11 administrative support facility, equipped with computer resources and staffed by
12 trained personnel. It provides in-person, phone, and online assistance, including
13 technical support, guidance on completing applications, and educational resources
14 on using the digital platform. By promoting equitable access and reducing barriers
15 for underserved applicants and individuals with limited digital literacy, the Help
16 Center enhances user engagement and supports broader economic inclusion.

17 Last, this Act introduces conditional business licenses, which allows
18 businesses to commence limited operations while awaiting inspections and final
19 agency approvals, subject to a 60-day compliance window. These conditional
20 business licenses are only available through the Digital OneStop Platform, ensuring
21 that all agency data and applicant progress remain transparent and traceable.

1 Additionally, restricting conditional business licenses to those who apply through
2 the digital platform encourages applicants to use new system and reduces regulatory
3 blind spots. By introducing conditional business licensing, this Act provides a
4 practical mechanism for businesses to begin operations sooner—without
5 compromising regulatory oversight or public safety.

6 Thus, this Act establishes the institutional and technological foundation
7 necessary to streamline business licensing and permitting, promote transparency,
8 and support new business enterprise formation.

9 **Section 3. Repeal and Replacement.** Article 4 of Chapter 6, Division 5,
10 Title 4 of the Commonwealth Code is hereby repealed and replaced with the
11 following:

12 **“Article 4. CNMI OneStop Business Start-Up Act.**

13 **§ 101. Definitions.**

14 For purposes of this Article, the following terms have the meanings set
15 forth below, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

16 (a) “Conditional business license” means a temporary, provisional license
17 issued through the Digital OneStop Platform that authorizes limited
18 operation of a business during the permit review period, subject to
19 conditions set forth in this Article.

20 (b) “Digital platform” or “Digital OneStop Platform” means the centralized
21 online system established under this Article for business owners and

1 applicants to apply for, monitor, and manage all licenses, permits, and
2 clearances required for starting and operating a business in the CNMI.

3 (c) “Help Center” or “CNMI Business Start-Up Help Center” means the
4 physical service location and administrative support facility within the
5 Department of Commerce that provides technical assistance, application
6 guidance, and digital literacy resources to users of the Digital OneStop
7 Platform.

8 (d) “Permit” means any approval, clearance, inspection, certification, or
9 authorization issued by a regulatory agency that is required to operate a
10 business or to construct, develop, or use land, buildings, or facilities for
11 business purposes.

12 (e) “Task Force” or “CNMI Business Start-Up Coordination Task Force”
13 means the interagency body established under § 102 of this Article to
14 oversee the implementation of the Digital OneStop Platform and
15 coordinate licensing and permitting functions across relevant
16 government entities.

17 **§ 102. Establishment of the CNMI Business Start-Up Coordination**
18 **Task Force.**

19 (a) There is hereby established, under the Office of the Governor, the CNMI
20 Business Start-Up Coordination Task Force. The Task Force shall
21 oversee the implementation of this Article.

- 1 (b) The Task Force shall include representatives from all CNMI government
2 entities involved in business licensing, permitting, or regulatory
3 approval, and may consult with other departments, offices, agencies,
4 autonomous entities, public corporations, or municipal governments as
5 necessary to ensure comprehensive coordination across all relevant
6 functions. At a minimum, the Task Force shall be comprised of the
7 following members:
- 8 (1) The Secretary of the Department of Commerce, who shall serve as
9 the Chair;
- 10 (2) A representative from the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal
11 Quality;
- 12 (3) A representative from the Department of Community and Cultural
13 Affairs, Historic Preservation Office;
- 14 (4) A representative from the Department of Finance, Division of
15 Revenue and Taxation;
- 16 (5) A representative from the Department of Fire and Emergency
17 Medical Services;
- 18 (6) A representative from the Department of Labor;
- 19 (7) A representative from the Department of Public Lands;
- 20 (8) A representative from the Department of Land and Natural
21 Resources;

- 1 (9) A representative from the Department of Public Works;
2 (10) A representative from the Department of Public Safety;
3 (11) A representative from the Department of Fish and Wildlife;
4 (12) A representative from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation;
5 (13) A representative from the Commonwealth Ports Authority;
6 (14) A representative from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation;
7 (15) A representative from the Commonwealth Zoning Board;
8 (16) A representative from the Commonwealth Lottery Commission; and
9 (17) A representative from the Office of the Governor.

10 **§ 103. Duties and Responsibilities of the Task Force.**

11 The Task Force shall have the following duties:

- 12 (a) Coordinate with all relevant agencies to integrate business licensing and
13 permitting functions into the Digital OneStop Platform, while
14 preserving each agency's regulatory authority.
- 15 (b) Oversee the design, development, and functionality of the Digital
16 OneStop Platform, including the creation of a user-friendly interface
17 capable of generating a customized checklist of permit and license
18 requirements based on business type, location, and scope.
- 19 (c) Provide strategic oversight of the licensing process, including review of
20 digital platform performance, identification of challenges, and
21 implementation of necessary improvements.

- 1 (d) Engage with stakeholders, such as business owners, agency personnel,
2 and community representatives, to ensure the digital platform reflects
3 community needs.
- 4 (e) Establish standardized procedures for interagency coordination and
5 define the roles and responsibilities of each agency representative on the
6 Task Force, consistent with this Article and applicable law.
- 7 (f) Coordinate the implementation of a conditional business licensing
8 process, including eligibility criteria, timelines, and compliance
9 tracking, as further described in § 106 of this Article.
- 10 (g) Compile and synthesize licensing and permitting procedures from
11 participating agencies into standardized workflows and business-type
12 checklists, and consolidate duplicate requirements into unified forms or
13 data fields to improve efficiency.
- 14 (h) Facilitate the procurement and management of experienced software
15 developers, vendors, or contractors to build and maintain the digital
16 platform.
- 17 (i) Ensure that local personnel receive training and participate in the
18 development of the digital platform to support knowledge transfer and
19 long-term capacity building for digital platform maintenance, updates,
20 and user support.
- 21 (j) Track and analyze interagency processing times and identify delays or

1 bottlenecks.

2 **§ 104. Digital OneStop Platform Features.**

3 The Digital OneStop Platform shall be developed and maintained
4 under the direction of the Task Force and shall incorporate, but not be
5 limited to, the following features:

- 6 (a) An online portal through which businesses may submit applications for
7 all required licenses, permits, and agency clearances based on the type,
8 location, and scope of their business.
- 9 (b) A real-time status tracking system that allows applicants and
10 participating agencies to monitor progress, view pending items, and
11 receive agency updates in a centralized dashboard.
- 12 (c) Integrated electronic payment options for fees associated with licenses,
13 permits, inspections, and renewals.
- 14 (d) A centralized database accessible to all participating regulatory agencies
15 to promote interagency coordination, reduce duplicate requests, and
16 ensure efficient processing of applications.
- 17 (e) Automated notifications to applicants regarding the status of their
18 applications, outstanding documentation, scheduled inspections,
19 deadlines, and renewal dates.
- 20 (f) A built-in customer support interface and help request function to assist
21 applicants in navigating the platform, resolving technical issues, and

1 connecting with the CNMI Business Start-Up Help Center or
2 appropriate agencies for guidance on regulatory requirements.

3 (g) The digital platform shall allow users to complete forms online or
4 download fillable versions to be submitted electronically at a later time.
5 Uploaded forms shall be treated as valid submissions.

6 (h) The digital platform shall have integrated cybersecurity measures and
7 data protection protocols, such as secure user authentication, encryption
8 of sensitive data, regular data backups, and compliance with applicable
9 privacy laws.

10 **§ 105. Legal Effect of Digital OneStop Platform Submissions and**
11 **Agency Actions.**

12 (a) Any license or permit application that a participating agency's statute,
13 rule, or regulation requires to be submitted directly to the agency or to
14 the head of the agency shall be deemed satisfied if submitted through
15 the Digital OneStop Platform.

16 (b) All approvals, certifications, or official actions taken by an agency
17 through the Digital OneStop Platform, including digital signatures or
18 authenticated confirmations, shall have the same legal effect as if
19 executed in writing or in person, and shall constitute valid agency
20 action.

1 **§ 106. Conditional Business Licensing.**

2 (a) A conditional business license shall be issued within five business days
3 upon verification that the applicant has submitted a complete
4 application through the Digital OneStop Platform, paid all required fees,
5 and that the business qualifies under the list of conditionally eligible
6 business types or activities established pursuant to subsection (d) herein.

7 (b) The conditional business license grants the applicant limited authority
8 to begin business operations while awaiting final inspections,
9 certifications, or agency approvals. This limited authority does not
10 extend to any activities that pose immediate risks to public health,
11 safety, or the environment, including, but not limited to, food service,
12 handling of hazardous materials, or on-site operations, unless and until
13 the relevant agencies have conducted and cleared any required
14 inspections or authorizations.

15 (c) No conditional business license shall authorize the use or occupancy of
16 any physical premises by employees or the public until the business has
17 obtained all required fire safety, occupancy, and building code
18 approvals from the applicable agencies.

19 (d) The Task Force, in coordination with participating regulatory agencies,
20 shall develop and publish a list of business types or activities considered
21 eligible for conditional business licenses, along with any specific

1 conditions or exclusions. This list shall be reviewed and updated at least
2 annually and made publicly available through the Digital OneStop
3 Platform. The following business types and activities are provided for
4 illustrative purposes only and do not constitute an exhaustive list of
5 those considered eligible for conditional business licenses, the
6 determination of which remains subject to agency-specific limitations
7 and conditions:

8 (1) Administrative office operations that do not serve the public on-site
9 and do not involve hazardous materials or other regulated activities
10 requiring prior agency approval;

11 (2) Retail sales of non-perishable goods, such as clothing, hardware, or
12 office supplies;

13 (3) Personal service businesses, such as barbershops or salons, upon
14 confirmation by the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation that
15 minimum sanitation, equipment, and facility standards have been
16 met; and

17 (4) Grocery stores, convenience stores, and restaurants, upon passing all
18 required food safety and sanitation inspections by the
19 Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation and any other applicable
20 agency.

21 Inclusion in the above list of illustrative business types and activities

1 shall not by itself confer eligibility for a conditional business license.

2 All eligibility determinations remain subject to final review by the
3 relevant regulatory agencies.

4 (e) Conditional business licenses shall be valid for an initial period of 60
5 calendar days, during which the applicant must satisfy all required
6 inspections, certifications, or agency approvals relevant to the operation
7 of their business.

8 (f) Applicants may avail of a one-time 30-day extension by submitting an
9 extension request through the Digital OneStop Platform prior to the
10 expiration of the initial conditional business license period.

11 (g) Additional extensions beyond 30 days require a written justification and
12 approval from the Secretary of Commerce, who may consult with
13 relevant regulatory agencies. In no case shall the total conditional
14 licensing period, including extensions, exceed 120 calendar days.

15 (h) All conditional business licenses shall be monitored via the Digital
16 OneStop Platform, which shall track outstanding compliance items,
17 inspection status, and expiration dates.

18 (i) Participating agencies may suspend or block any conditional business
19 license that pertains to their jurisdiction, if they determine that
20 continued operation poses an immediate risk to public interest, health,
21 safety, or the environment. The Department of Commerce shall

1 establish and publish a procedure for agencies to take such action
2 through the Digital OneStop Platform. The procedure shall include
3 prompt notice to the affected applicant and an opportunity to respond.

4 (j) Operation under a conditional business license does not guarantee or
5 create a property interest in the issuance of a final business license or
6 permit. All conditional business licenses are revocable and contingent
7 on full compliance with applicable laws and agency determinations.
8 Nothing in this Article shall create a property interest or guarantee in
9 the issuance or continuation of a conditional business license.

10 **§ 107. Ongoing Interagency Collaboration and Agency Notification**
11 **Requirements.**

12 (a) To carry out its responsibilities and support ongoing interagency
13 coordination, the Task Force shall convene at least once every quarter,
14 or more frequently as determined by the Chair, until one year after the
15 launch of the Digital OneStop Platform. Thereafter, the Task Force shall
16 meet no less than twice per year.

17 (b) Any CNMI Government regulatory body that modifies, updates, or
18 repeals any business license or permit requirement, including associated
19 forms, fees, or eligibility criteria, shall submit written notice of such
20 changes to the Secretary of Commerce within ten business days of the
21 change taking effect. The Secretary shall ensure the Digital OneStop

1 Platform is updated accordingly to reflect the current requirements. The
2 Task Force shall monitor agency compliance with this requirement and
3 summarize such compliance in its annual report.

4 (c) The Task Force shall also track and analyze interagency processing
5 times, identify delays or recurring bottlenecks, and monitor agency
6 performance in processing applications through the Digital OneStop
7 Platform. Persistent noncompliance, delays, or failure to meet
8 coordination obligations shall be reported to the Governor for
9 appropriate executive action or support.

10 **§ 108. Establishment of the CNMI Business Start-Up Help Center;**
11 **Training and Outreach.**

12 (a) The Department of Commerce shall establish a “CNMI Business Start-
13 Up Help Center” to support users of the Digital OneStop Platform. The
14 Help Center shall operate as a physical service location and
15 administrative support facility, equipped with computer resources and
16 staffed by trained personnel capable of assisting individuals who may
17 lack technical proficiency.

18 (b) The Help Center shall provide, but not be limited to, the following
19 services:

20 (1) Assistance in navigating the digital platform;

21 (2) Guidance on the completion and submission of online applications;

- 1 (3) Technical support for issues arising from the digital platform; and
2 (4) Educational resources and training sessions focused on the effective
3 use of the digital platform.

4 (c) The Department of Commerce shall conduct outreach and education
5 efforts to raise awareness of the Digital OneStop Platform. These efforts
6 shall include training sessions and the dissemination of educational
7 materials to business owners and stakeholders. Outreach shall include
8 in-person or virtual engagement with applicants in Tinian, Rota, and
9 other remote or underserved areas, as necessary to ensure equitable
10 access.

11 **§ 109. Implementation Timeline.**

- 12 (a) The Task Force, led by the Department of Commerce, shall coordinate
13 the design and development of the Digital OneStop Platform. The
14 Department of Commerce shall serve as the agency responsible for
15 procurement, vendor management, and project implementation.
- 16 (b) Within 90 days of the effective date of this Article, each participating
17 agency shall submit to the Task Force a written summary of its current
18 business licensing or permitting process, including application forms,
19 required documentation, review criteria, applicable fees, processing
20 timelines, and responsible personnel. If additional time is needed to
21 complete detailed process maps or supporting documentation, an

1 extension of up to 30 days may be granted by the Chair of the Task
2 Force upon written request.

3 (c) The Task Force shall compile and synthesize agency submissions into
4 standardized workflows and business-type checklists to serve as the
5 foundation for platform development and vendor implementation.

6 (d) The Task Force may implement the Digital OneStop Platform in phases,
7 provided that the platform's core features, such as online application
8 submission, fee processing, interagency coordination, and real-time
9 application status tracking, are operational within 24 months of this
10 Article's effective date. The Task Force may limit conditional business
11 licenses to those business activities whose full licensing and permitting
12 workflows have been fully integrated into the Digital OneStop Platform.

13 **§ 110. OneStop Business Start-Up Fund.**

14 (a) There is established in the Commonwealth Treasury a special non-
15 lapsing revolving fund to be known as the "OneStop Business Start-Up
16 Fund," which shall be maintained by the Secretary of Finance. All
17 revenues generated from the Online Portal Fee authorized under
18 subsection (e), as well as revenues from federal grants, public-private
19 partnerships, appropriations, donations, or any other lawful funding
20 sources available to support the objectives of this Article, shall be
21 deposited into this fund.

- 1 (b) Monies in the fund shall be used solely for the development,
2 implementation, operation, and ongoing maintenance of the Digital
3 OneStop Platform and the associated CNMI Business Start-Up Help
4 Center, including, but not limited to, software upgrades, technical
5 support, public outreach, and user training.
- 6 (c) The funds deposited into the OneStop Business Start-Up Fund are
7 hereby continuously appropriated for the purposes identified in this
8 Section and shall not revert at the end of the fiscal year. Notwithstanding
9 the continuing appropriation, all disbursements shall remain subject to
10 the accounting, disbursement, and reporting regulations promulgated by
11 the Department of Finance.
- 12 (d) The Secretary of Commerce shall serve as the expenditure authority for
13 this fund and may obligate funds in accordance with applicable
14 Commonwealth laws and regulations. All expenditures shall be
15 processed through the Department of Finance in accordance with
16 standard fiscal procedures.
- 17 (e) The Department of Commerce is authorized to establish and collect a
18 reasonable Online Portal Fee from individuals or entities that submit
19 license or permit applications through the Digital OneStop Platform.
20 Revenues from the fee shall be deposited into the OneStop Business
21 Start-Up Fund and used to support the operational, maintenance, and

1 future development components of the Digital OneStop Platform and
2 the CNMI Business Start-Up Help Center, as described in subsection
3 (b). The fee may be assessed on a one-time, annual, per-application, or
4 tiered basis, as determined by regulation.

5 (f) The Department of Commerce, in consultation with the Department of
6 Finance, shall promulgate regulations to establish, adjust, and
7 administer the fee, including procedures for collection, exemptions for
8 financial hardship or small businesses, and publication of fee schedules.
9 All such regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with the Open
10 Government Act, 1 CMC §§ 9901 et seq.

11 **§ 111. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting.**

12 (a) The Department of Commerce shall conduct continuous monitoring of
13 the Digital OneStop Platform and the CNMI Business Start-Up Help
14 Center to evaluate their performance, identify challenges, and
15 recommend improvements.

16 (b) The Department of Commerce shall submit an annual report to the
17 presiding officers of the Legislature, which shall include:

18 (1) A summary of expenditures from the OneStop Business Start-Up
19 Fund;

20 (2) Key milestones achieved in the development and operation of the
21 Digital OneStop Platform and CNMI Business Start-Up Help

- 1 Center;
- 2 (3) Any planned enhancements or upgrades to the Digital OneStop
- 3 Platform; and
- 4 (4) Key monitoring metrics, including but not limited to:
- 5 (i) Average processing times for standard business licenses;
- 6 (ii) Number of new business registrations;
- 7 (iii) User engagement and feedback;
- 8 (iv) Overall system utilization and efficiency;
- 9 (v) Number of conditional business licenses issued;
- 10 (vi) Number of conditional business licenses converted to full
- 11 licenses;
- 12 (vii) Number of conditional business licenses that expired or were
- 13 revoked; and
- 14 (viii) Agency compliance with update and coordination obligations.
- 15 (c) The OneStop Business Start-Up Fund shall be subject to audit by the
- 16 Office of the Public Auditor and the Department of Finance.

17 **§ 112. Regulatory Authority.**

18 The Department of Commerce, in coordination with the CNMI Business

19 Start-Up Coordination Task Force and participating agencies, may adopt

20 regulations as necessary to implement and administer this Article. All such

1 regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with the Open Government
2 Act, 1 CMC §§ 9901 et seq.”

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

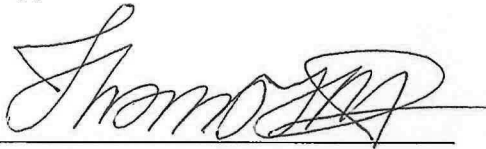
8 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein
9 shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or
10 acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted
11 under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall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

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

Prefiled: 7/3/2025

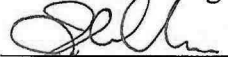
Date: _____

Introduced by: _____



Rep. Thomas John DLC. Manglona

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:



House Legal Counsel

Date: 7/3/25