

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

_____, 2025

_____, 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.

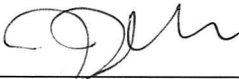
Prefiled: 3/7/2025

Date: _____

Introduced by: _____

Rep. Joel C. Camacho

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:



House Legal Counsel

3/7/25

