

**TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH**

**LEGISLATURE**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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\_\_\_\_\_ Session, 2026

H. B. 24- 96

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To appropriate \$960,235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as additional funds available for appropriation in Governors Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism recovery initiatives.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24<sup>TH</sup> NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1           **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** Tourism is the cornerstone of the  
2 Commonwealth's private-sector economy and remains directly dependent on  
3 sustained air access, destination competitiveness, and visitor demand. The  
4 Legislature finds that, despite stabilization efforts, the tourism sector continues to  
5 operate under severe constraints, including airline seat capacity well below pre-  
6 pandemic levels, reduced or suspended routes, historically low hotel occupancy  
7 outside limited peak periods, and declining visitor arrivals that closely track airlift  
8 availability.

9           Ongoing structural and external pressures have materially impeded recovery,  
10 including unfavorable exchange rates in core source markets, global aircraft  
11 delivery delays, heightened regional competition driven by aggressive subsidy

1 programs, and aviation market uncertainty affecting carrier deployment decisions.  
2 The Legislature further finds that existing hotel occupancy levels remain far below  
3 estimated break-even thresholds, locally generated revenues such as Hotel  
4 Occupancy Tax collections have declined sharply from pre-pandemic levels, and  
5 these revenue shortfalls have constrained the scale and timing of tourism recovery  
6 efforts.

7 Uninterrupted and reliable air service is the most critical determinant of  
8 tourism performance in the Commonwealth, as evidenced by strong load factors  
9 despite overall capacity reductions. The Legislature finds that strategic airline  
10 incentive support, cooperative marketing programs, and sustained destination  
11 branding are necessary to retain existing service, stabilize frequencies, encourage  
12 seasonal and future expansion, and signal to airline partners that the  
13 Commonwealth is committed to protecting and rebuilding its airlift in a highly  
14 competitive regional environment.

15 Responding to these conditions, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate  
16 \$960,235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as additional  
17 funds available for appropriation from outside sources, in Governor's  
18 Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism  
19 recovery efforts.

20 **Section 2. Appropriation.** Notwithstanding any laws, rules, or regulations  
21 to the contrary, the Tobacco Settlement Funds in the amount of \$960,235.74 is

1 hereby appropriated as follows:

2 (a) \$960,235.74 shall be allocated to the Marianas Visitors Authority for  
3 tourism recovery efforts. The expenditure authority shall be the Chairperson of the  
4 Board of Directors of the Marianas Visitors Authority.

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

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

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

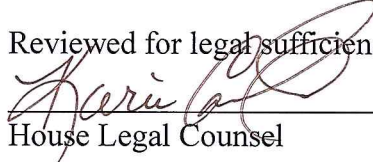
Prefiled: 02-13-2020

Date: 02/13/20

Introduced by:

Rep. Marissa R. Flores

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

  
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House Legal Counsel

Date: 2-12-26

