

**TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH**  
**LEGISLATURE**  
**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Regular Session, 2025

H. J. R. 24-1

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**A HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION**

To urgently request for the immediate inclusion of the Republic of the Philippines in the nonimmigrant Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security.

1           **WHEREAS**, the Legislature recognizes the importance of granting visa-  
2 free tourist entry to the Republic of the Philippines for the benefit of the people of  
3 the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI); and

4           **WHEREAS**, on May 2024, the 119<sup>th</sup> Republic of the Philippines House of  
5 Representatives passed House Resolution 226 urging the President of the United  
6 States of America to include the Republic of the Philippines in the United States  
7 Department of Homeland's Security Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program; and

8           **WHEREAS**, the United States Department of Homeland Security's  
9 nonimmigrant Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program allows qualified passport  
10 holders of 12 pre-approved nations to enter Guam and/or the CNMI with a visa-  
11 free stay of up to 45 days; and

1           **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with  
2 the U.S. Secretary of State, must designate visa-waiver qualified countries as  
3 “program countries”; and

4           **WHEREAS**, the criteria for a “program country” designation include  
5 passport security, a nonimmigrant visa refusal rate below three percent (3%), as  
6 well as reciprocal visa waivers for U.S. passport holders; and

7           **WHEREAS**, as of 2025, the Philippine passport ranks as the world’s 75<sup>th</sup>  
8 most powerful, bumping up from 77<sup>th</sup> in 2021, with access to 65 nations without a  
9 visa; and

10           **WHEREAS**, each Philippine ePassport contains a Radio Frequency  
11 Identification (RFID) microchip to securely store information and help protect  
12 against safety threats and identity theft, an essential requirement for program  
13 countries; and

14           **WHEREAS**, the Philippines’ nonimmigrant B-visa refusal rate in the U.S.  
15 is 28.33% for Fiscal Year 2024; and

16           **WHEREAS**, according to the October 2024 U.S. Congressional Research  
17 Service Visa Waiver Program report, “Under statute, the Secretary of Homeland  
18 Security has the authority to waive the nonimmigrant visa refusal rate requirement”;  
19 and

20           **WHEREAS**, every qualified foreign passport holder wishing to enter Guam  
21 and/or the CNMI must obtain admission within 45 days, admission to only Guam

1 and/or the CNMI, and a signed Form 1-736 and Form I-94, without the requirement  
2 for electronic travel authorization; and

3           **WHEREAS**, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)  
4 reports that the Philippines is projected to reach upper-middle-income status by the  
5 end of calendar year 2025; and

6           **WHEREAS**, the inclusion of the Philippines into the Guam-CNMI Visa  
7 Waiver program could prove beneficial to the tourism industry due to the close ties  
8 and relative proximity of the Philippines with the CNMI; and

9           **WHEREAS**, U.S. Census Bureau data indicates that more than 15,000  
10 Filipinos, nearly 35% of the total population, currently reside in the CNMI and  
11 would greatly appreciate visits from their family and friends; and

12           **WHEREAS**, the Hotel Association for the Northern Marianas Islands  
13 (HANMI) predicts that inclusion of the Philippines to the Guam-CNMI visa waiver  
14 program could bring in over 400,000 new visitors; and

15           **WHEREAS**, the overall wait time for administrative processing, an  
16 approximately 56 day wait-time for an interview appointment, and lengthy travel  
17 periods to file at the main U.S. Embassy in Manila are an incredibly prolonged,  
18 extensive procedure that may inhibit travel; and

19           **WHEREAS**, the Philippines and the United States uphold and preserve  
20 longstanding historical and cultural ties and remain actively and strategically allied  
21 in trade, defense, security, and democratic values;

1           **WHEREAS**, South Korea, which shares a close alliance with the United  
2 States similar to that of the Philippines, is allowed visa-free tourist entry to Guam  
3 and the CNMI for up to 90 days as per its inclusion in the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver  
4 Program, while U.S. passport holders are allowed to enter South Korea without a  
5 visa; and

6           **WHEREAS**, U.S. passport holders have long been allowed to enter the  
7 Philippines without a visa; and

8           **WHEREAS**, the Philippines and the United States maintain a close security  
9 alliance due to the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, 1998 Visiting  
10 Forces Agreement, and more recently, the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation  
11 Agreement (EDCA) which authorizes U.S. forces' access to designated bases in the  
12 Philippines for strategic joint military operations and training, humanitarian  
13 assistance, and disaster relief activities; and

14           **WHEREAS**, granting the Philippines visa-free entry to the CNMI will  
15 strengthen the U.S.-Philippines partnership, reinforcing joint military defense  
16 efforts and furthering shared goals of security and democracy;

17           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the House of  
18 Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth  
19 Legislature, the Senate concurring, urgently requests for the immediate inclusion  
20 of the Republic of the Philippines in the nonimmigrant Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver  
21 Program administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security; and

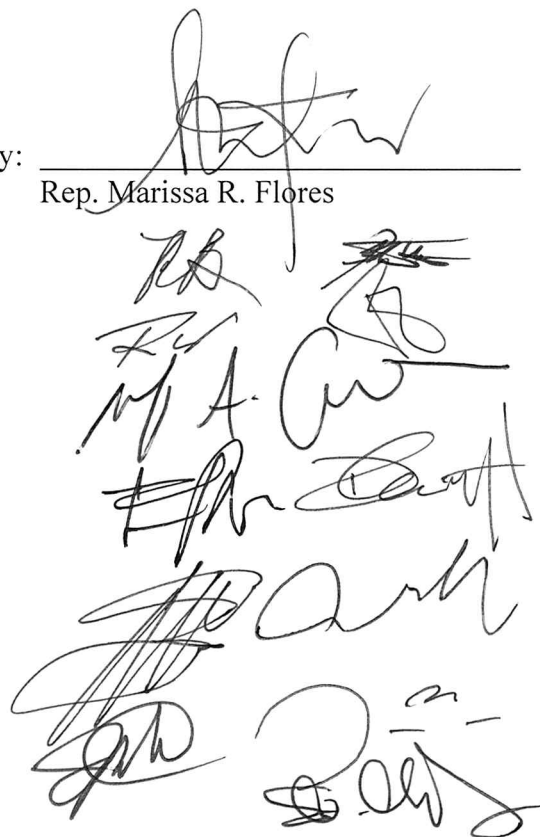
1           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Speaker of the House of  
2 Representatives and the President of the Senate shall certify and the House Clerk  
3 and the Senate Legislative Secretary shall attest to the adoption of this joint  
4 resolution and thereafter the House Clerk shall transmit a copy to the Honorable  
5 Kristie Noem, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; the Honorable  
6 Arnold I. Palacios, Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the  
7 Honorable Kimberlyn K. King-Hinds, CNMI Delegate to the U.S. House of  
8 Representatives, 119<sup>th</sup> United States Congress; and the Honorable Dennis C.  
9 Mendiola, Senate President, 24<sup>th</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Prefiled: 3/5/2025

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Introduced by: \_\_\_\_\_

Rep. Marissa R. Flores

A collection of handwritten signatures in black ink. The largest signature at the top is identified as Rep. Marissa R. Flores. Below it are several other signatures of varying sizes and styles, some appearing to be initials or first names.