



GOV. COMM. 24-172
(HOUSE)

David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

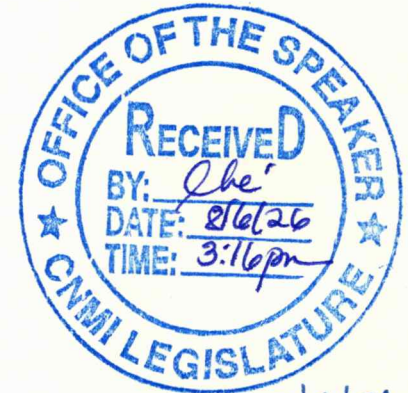
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 6, 2026

GOV2026-494

The Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President
The Senate; Twenty-Fourth Northern
Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker
House of Representatives; Twenty-Fourth Northern
Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950



Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

RECEIVED BY *Smr*
DATE 8/7/2026 TIME 10:44AM

8/7/26

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **Senate Bill No. 24-48**, entitled, "To establish a Division of Customs and Biosecurity within the Department of Finance for the purposes enforcing all laws at the ports of entry and that is responsible for the inspection and clearance of containers, cargo, baggage related to customs and biosecurity at the ports of entry, and other matters related to border security.", which was passed by the Senate of and the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 24-36**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission;
Public Auditor; Department of Lands and Natural Resources; Secretary of Finance;
Division of Customs; Programs and Legislative Review



**THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE**

SENATE BILL NO. 24-48

AN ACT

To establish a Division of Customs and Biosecurity within the Department of Finance for the purposes enforcing all laws at the ports of entry and that is responsible for the inspection and clearance of containers, cargo, baggage related to customs and biosecurity at the ports of entry, and other matters related to border security.

SENATE ACTION

Offered by Senator(s): Jude U. Hofschneider

Date: September 30, 2025

Referred to: Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-78 adopted on 05/01/26

Final Reading: May 01, 2026

HOUSE ACTION

Referred to: Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-60

Final Reading: July 28, 2026


**SENATOR FRANCISCO Q. CRUZ
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY**



THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION, 2025 **S.B. NO. 24-48**

AN ACT

To establish a Division of Customs and Biosecurity within the Department of Finance for the purposes enforcing all laws at the ports of entry and that is responsible for the inspection and clearance of containers, cargo, baggage related to customs and biosecurity at the ports of entry, and other matters related to border security.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that Executive Order 2021-
2 009 transferred the Agricultural Quarantine Section within the Department of Lands and
3 Natural Resources, to the Division of Customs Services, within the Department of Finance,
4 and designated the Division as the Division of Customs and Quarantine. Both the Agricultural
5 Quarantine Section and the Division of Customs Service share in the implementation of the
6 Commonwealth's efforts to protect the Commonwealth's borders, utilizing the same facilities
7 and performing collaborative functions. Executive Order 2021-009 also transferred all
8 records and property (real or personal) of the Agricultural Quarantine Section and all
9 personnel are to maintain their current positions and status in the classified civil service or in
10 the excepted services to the Division of Customs.

11 The Legislature finds that in general, the term "biosecurity" involves restricting the
12 movement of anything capable of carrying disease or disease-causing agents, including
13 people, pigs, birds, etc. and taking precautionary measures to prevent any exposure to harmful
14 biological agents.

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1 The Legislature further finds that it is a standard practice to name the organization as
2 Customs and Biosecurity in order to give equal importance to the functions of customs and
3 biosecurity at the ports of entry. The Legislature finds that all personnel of the Division
4 should also be classified as law enforcement officers similar to the classification of customs
5 officers.

6 Since the merger, the Division of Customs and Quarantine has diligently safeguarded
7 the Commonwealth's ports of entry and will continue to identify and prevent the importation
8 of contraband and prohibited items into our islands. However, legislation is required to fully
9 merge the Agriculture Quarantine Section with the Division of Customs, to rename the
10 "Division Customs and Biosecurity," and to enable the Division to discharge its obligations to
11 the people of the Commonwealth.

12 **Section 2. Amendment.** 1 CMC § 2553 is hereby amended to read as follows:

13 "(i) To be responsible for customs, ~~and~~ baggage inspection, and biosecurity at the
14 ports of entry, and other matters related to border security;"

15 **Section 3. Amendment.** Title 1, Division 2, Part 1, Chapter 11, Article 7 of the
16 Commonwealth Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

17 "Article 7. **Division of Customs and Biosecurity.**

18 **§ 25201. Division of Customs and Biosecurity: Established.** There is in the
19 Department of Finance a Division of Customs and Biosecurity headed by a director who shall
20 be within the civil service. No person may be director who does not possess professional
21 qualifications including at least eight years of progressively increasing experience in the field
22 of Customs and/or Biosecurity. Subject to the overall direction of the Secretary of Finance,
23 the Director shall have supervision over and be responsible for all matters concerning customs
24 and biosecurity on a day-to-day basis, including employees' reallocation, promotion, and
25 reclassification.

26 **§ 25202. Administration and Enforcement.**

27 (a) Customs and biosecurity personnel are law enforcement officers who are engaged
28 in the enforcement of the excise tax laws, the Commonwealth Controlled Substances Act, the
29 Weapons Control Act, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1991, the Customs and Biosecurity Act,

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1 other local and federal laws enforced at the ports of entry, and in the interception of
2 contraband, including items subject to biosecurity and quarantine laws. All personnel
3 transferred to Customs and Biosecurity by Executive Order 2021-009 shall be compensated
4 on the pay scales applicable to the of Customs Services.

5 (b) Other Government Agencies. By agreement, the Director of the Customs and
6 Biosecurity Division may utilize the personnel services and facilities of other agencies of the
7 government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or other government
8 agencies, including the federal government, for proper enforcement of excise tax laws,
9 quarantine and biosecurity laws, other laws enforced at the ports of entry, and regulations
10 promulgated by the Secretary of Finance.

11 **§ 25201 § 25203. Collection of Fines & Fees at the Ports of Entry**

12 The Department of Finance specifically the Division of Customs and Biosecurity is
13 hereby vested with the authority to collect and keep all fines, fees, and statutory penalties
14 imposed on businesses and individuals at the ports of entry for but not limited to training,
15 operations and personnel costs associated with the Division's mission to improve services and
16 the fight on the ice epidemic in the Commonwealth. Such funds shall not be subject to
17 reprogramming. Provided further that the Division of Customs and Biosecurity shall create
18 rules and regulations to standardize fines, fees, and penalties and to regulate such fines, fees,
19 and penalties. The expenditure authority of all the collections shall be the Secretary of Finance
20 in consultation with the Director of the Division of Customs and Biosecurity or his/her
21 designee.

22 **§ 25202 § 25204. Reporting Requirement.**

23 The Secretary of Finance in collaboration with the Director of the Division of
24 Customs and Biosecurity shall report, on the collection and expenditure of all fines, fees and
25 penalties collected pursuant to 1 CMC § 25203~~4~~, on a quarterly basis to the Presiding Officers
26 of the Legislature.

27 **§ 25205. References to the Department of Finance Division of Customs. All**
28 references within the Commonwealth Code to the Department of Finance Division of
29 Customs or Division of Customs Service or Division of Customs and Quarantine shall be

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revised to the Department of Finance Division of Customs and Biosecurity or Division of Customs and Biosecurity.”

Section 4. Repealer and Reenactment. Title 2, Division 5, Chapter 3, Article 1 of the Commonwealth Code is hereby repealed and reenacted to read as follows:

“Article 1. Customs and Biosecurity Act.

§ 5301. Short Title. This Act may be cited as the “Customs and Biosecurity Act.”

§ 5302. Purpose. In order to protect the agricultural industry and general well-being of the people of the Commonwealth, biosecurity legislation is promulgated as a means of preventing the introduction and dissemination of injurious insects, pests, diseases and harmful biological agents into and within the Commonwealth.

§ 5303. Promulgation of Regulations.

(a) The Director of Customs and Biosecurity shall promulgate customs and biosecurity regulations governing plant and animal quarantines and relating to the administration and enforcement of the controls established by this chapter. Letters and memoranda may be issued from time to time by the Director of Customs and Biosecurity relating to the administration and enforcement of such controls, quarantines, and customs and biosecurity regulations.

(b) Emergency orders relating to domestic quarantine may be issued from time to time by the Director of Customs and Biosecurity provided such orders are not in conflict with the controls, quarantines, and customs and biosecurity regulations promulgated pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

§ 5304. Administration and Enforcement.

(a) The Director of Customs and Biosecurity shall administer any plant and animal quarantine controls and quarantines required under the Customs and Biosecurity Act and/or the customs and biosecurity regulations.

§ 5305. Emergency Measures Authorized.

(a) Upon the discovery of a situation not covered by the controls, quarantines, or customs and biosecurity regulations issued under the Customs and Biosecurity Act, or any other situation warranting immediate action, emergency quarantine measures may be taken at any time by a customs and biosecurity officer or the Director of Customs and Biosecurity.

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(b) Such emergency biosecurity measures must be reviewed by the Director of Customs and Biosecurity and either incorporated into existing regulations in the manner which is or may be provided by law, or rescinded as soon as practicable after issuance, and in no case shall such action be taken later than 30 days after the measure is taken.

§ 5306. Inspection.

(a) All animals and plants or parts thereof, including seeds, fruits, vegetables, and cuttings, entering or transported within the Commonwealth are subject to inspection by customs and biosecurity officers and may be refused entry into or movement within the Commonwealth if they are known to be, or are suspected of being, infected or infested with disease or pests.

(b) All aircrafts and vessels or their cargoes, including baggage, ship's stores and ballast, entering or moving within the Commonwealth, are subject to inspection by customs and biosecurity officers for the purpose of enforcing the controls, quarantines and regulations established pursuant to this chapter; provided, that such inspections of U.S. military aircraft and vessels shall be subject to military security regulations.

(c) Any person that interferes with or refuses to submit to the inspections authorized by this section shall be subject to criminal and civil penalties contained in this article.

§ 5307. Manifests and Information. Cargo manifests and other similar documents concerning aircraft and vessels entering Commonwealth shall be provided to customs and biosecurity officers. Persons or authorities having information as to the movements of aircraft and vessels will furnish such information to customs and biosecurity officers.

§ 5308. In-Transit Material. Any animals, plants or other quarantinable material in transit through the Commonwealth on aircraft or vessels shall be kept aboard such aircraft or vessels while in port or on any island of the Commonwealth, unless such material is otherwise enterable. If it is necessary to transfer such quarantinable material from one vessel or aircraft to another, the transfer shall be made under the direction of a customs and biosecurity officer and with such safeguards as the officer deems necessary.

§ 5309. Disposition of Contraband Material. Anything attempted to be brought into or transported within the Commonwealth in contravention of the controls, quarantines or

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1 regulations established pursuant to the Biosecurity Act shall be seized by a customs and
2 biosecurity officer and destroyed by fire or other appropriate means, or expelled from the
3 Commonwealth, or returned to its place of origin, at the expense of the importer or consignee,
4 who shall be jointly and severally liable, depending on the risk involved.

5 **§ 5310. Treatment for Insects or Other Pests.** Vessels and aircraft traveling into or
6 within the Commonwealth and known or suspected upon reasonable grounds to be harboring
7 insects or other agricultural pests will be subject to treatment as may be deemed necessary by
8 customs and biosecurity officer(s); provided, that such treatment is performed by a certified
9 applicator in the CNMI. All treatment expenses shall be the responsibility of the importer or
10 consignee, with treatment to be monitored by a Customs Biosecurity officer to ensure
11 requirements are satisfactorily met per regulations.

12 **§ 5311. Importation of Meat Products, Frozen Semen, Garbage, Animal**
13 **Byproducts, Bedding Material and Certain Feedstuffs.**

14 (a) It is unlawful to import fresh, chilled, frozen and/or unprocessed meat or carcass of
15 any kind, including birds and poultry, from any part of the world into the Commonwealth,
16 except from the continental United States, Hawaii, Guam, and any other country, state or
17 territory allowed by the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health
18 Inspection Service.

19 (b) Meat or poultry permitted entry by the Director shall comply with all applicable
20 federal laws and regulations pertaining to meat and poultry inspection, as provided for by the
21 Federal Meat Inspection Act [21 U.S.C. § 601 et seq.], the Wholesome Meat Act [21 U.S.C. §
22 201 et seq.], the Poultry Products Inspection Act [21 U.S.C. § 451 et seq.], and other
23 applicable federal laws.

24 (c) It is unlawful to import semen or living animal serum produced in any part of the
25 world into the Commonwealth except from the continental United States, Hawaii, and Guam.
26 An animal quarantine permit issued by the CNMI State Veterinarian of the Animal Health
27 Industry is required as a condition of entry of frozen semen and living animal serum, and must
28 further be accompanied by such certificates as may be required in the permit. Any animal
29 semen imported must be certified free of venereal and genital diseases, including the donor

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1 animals, by an accredited veterinarian of the place of origin. Unless the entry conditions and
2 requirements stated on the import permit are fully complied with, the shipment shall be
3 refused entry.

4 (d) Dried, cured, cooked and other processed or manufactured meat and meat products
5 are prohibited entry except from the continental United States, Hawaii, Guam, and any other
6 country, state or territory allowed by the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal
7 and Plant Health Inspection Service. The above products shall be accompanied by adequate
8 proof of origin, including invoices or sales slips, specifying the amount of purchase made and
9 the dates thereof.

10 (e) All garbage from surface vessels and aircrafts must be held on board the ship or
11 plane while in port or incinerated in a United States Department of Agriculture or United
12 States Environmental Protection Agency approved disposal facility under supervision of an
13 authorized customs and biosecurity officer. All garbage on board a vessel or aircraft shall be
14 contained in tight, leakproof containers, be kept inside the vessel guardrail, and shall not be
15 unloaded unless contained in tight, leakproof containers and sent to an approved disposal
16 facility under general supervision of an authorized customs and biosecurity officer. Garbage
17 disposal fees may be charged at a rate to be determined by the Division of Customs and
18 Biosecurity.

19 (f) All other animal products and byproducts, including trophies, bloodmeal, blood
20 albumin, bones, horns, hoofs, feathers on skin, gluestock, hides, and skins, organs and glands,
21 tankage, wool, hair, bristles, ossein, casings, dairy products, pharmaceuticals, biologicals, etc.,
22 as well as straw, hay and grass, shall be governed and regulated by relevant provisions of Title
23 9 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations.

24 **§ 5312. Interference with Inspection Prohibited, Including Harassments, Threats**
25 **and Bodily Harm to Customs and Biosecurity Personnel.** It shall be unlawful for any
26 person or persons to interfere, in any way or manner, with the inspection procedures or with
27 the customs and biosecurity personnel, including harassment, threats and bodily harm to said
28 inspection personnel. Any person who engages in any of these prohibited acts shall be subject
29 to criminal and civil penalties contained in this article.

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§ 5313. Penalties.

(a) Criminal Penalty. Any person violating any of the provisions of this article or any regulations issued under the article shall upon conviction, be imprisoned for not more than six months or fined not more than \$2,000 or both.”

Section 5. Amendment. Title 2, Division 5, Chapter 3, Article 2 of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended as follows:

“Article 2. Animal Health Protection and Disease Control Act.

§ 5321. Purpose and Objectives.

(a) The purpose of this article is to:

(1) Establish a well-defined system for assisting the Division of Customs and Biosecurity with animal quarantine and inspection procedures, and establishing disease control activities to provide for the sound protection of domestic animals, poultry and birds, as well as pet animals and the public health; ~~Establish a well-defined system of animal quarantine, inspection procedures, and disease control activities to provide for the sound protection of domestic animals, poultry and birds, as well as pet animals and the public health;~~

....

§ 5324. Entry of Animals Without Inspection Prohibited.

(a) No domestic or wild animal, including livestock, birds and poultry, shall enter the Commonwealth, except after inspection by the Division of Customs and Biosecurity, and a representative from Animal Health and Industry if necessary, and the issuance of an entry permit by Animal Health and Industry to the consignee, importer, or owner. ~~No domestic or wild animal, including livestock, birds and poultry, shall enter the Commonwealth, except after inspection and the issuance of an entry permit by the chief to the consignee, importer, or owner.~~

....

~~§ 5327. Importation of Meat Products, Frozen Semen, Garbage, Animal Byproducts, Bedding Material and Certain Feedstuffs. [Repealed in its entirety].~~

....”

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Section 6. Amendment. Section 2301(a)(4) of Title 6 of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended as follows:

“§ 2301. Importation of Contraband.

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly enter the Commonwealth with the intent to import, or attempt to cause another to bring or import into the Commonwealth, or conceal for the purpose of importation, any of the following items:

...

(4) All animals and plants or parts thereof, including seeds, fruits, vegetables, and cuttings, entering or transported into the Commonwealth that violate the Customs and Biosecurity Act, Animal Health Protection and Disease Control Act, and applicable federal laws including, but not limited to, the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Wholesome Meat Act, and the Poultry Products Inspection Act.

....”

Section 7. Amendment. Section 10101(y)(7) of Title 6 of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended as follows:

“For purposes of this division:

...

(y) “Law Enforcement” means:

...

(7) any customs and biosecurity officer employed by the Department of Finance;

....”

Section 8. Amendment. Section 8282(f) of Title 1 of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended as follows:

“For purposes of this chapter, law enforcement officers shall include the following:

...

(f) Customs and biosecurity officers;

....”

Section 9. Severability. If any provision of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent

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1 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or
2 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

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

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

CERTIFIED BY:



KARL R. KING-NABORS
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ATTESTED BY:



FRANCISCO Q. CRUZ
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY

Approved this 6th day of August, 20²⁶~~25~~



DAVID M. APATANG

Governor

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



The Senate
NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
P.O. BOX 500129
SAIPAN, MP 96950

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-

78

Date: March 18, 2026

RE: Senate Bill No. 24-48

S Adopted 5/1/26

Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President of the Senate
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mister President:

Your Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law, to which was referred Senate Bill No. 24-48, entitled:

“To establish a Division of Customs and Biosecurity within the Department of Finance for the purposes enforcing all laws at the ports of entry and that is responsible for the inspection and clearance of containers, cargo, baggage related to customs and biosecurity at the ports of entry, and other matters related to border security.”

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion and deliberation, your Committee recommends passage of Senate Bill No. 24-48 in its current form.

II. ANALYSIS:

A) Purpose:

The purpose of Senate Bill No. 24-48 is to formalize the merger of the Agricultural Quarantine Section with the Division of Customs, and rename the division to the “Division of Customs and Biosecurity,” as well as to classify all personnel as law enforcement officers to strengthen protection at ports of entry and biosecurity efforts.

B) Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that Executive Order 2021-009 transferred the Agricultural Quarantine Section from the Department of Lands and Natural Resources to the Division of Customs Services within the Department of Finance, redesignating it as the Division of Customs and Quarantine. It further finds that both entities share responsibility for protecting the Commonwealth's borders through coordinated use of facilities and collaborative functions, and that all records, property, and personnel were transferred while preserving employees' existing civil service status.

Your Committee further finds that the term "biosecurity" involves restricting the movement of potential disease carriers, including people, animals, and other agents, and taking precautionary measures to prevent exposure to harmful biological threats. It notes that standard practice is to recognize this function equally with customs enforcement by naming such entities "Customs and Biosecurity."

Furthermore, your Committee finds that all personnel should be classified as law enforcement officers, consistent with customs officers, due to their role in safeguarding ports of entry. While the merged division has effectively prevented the importation of contraband, prohibited items, and harmful agents, legislation is necessary to fully formalize the merger, rename the agency as the Division of Customs and Biosecurity, and ensure it is properly authorized to carry out its responsibilities.

Your Committee met on March 18, 2026 to discuss the provisions of the proposed legislation. During the Committee Meeting, it was asked whether or not there is a need to include language indicating the powers of the customs officers in terms of detention, as they would be classified as law enforcement in the proposed legislation.

The Committee invited James Deleon Guerrero, Deputy Director of the Division of Customs and Quarantine to provide insight on the question posed by the Committee. Your Committee was informed by Deputy Director Deleon Guerrero that customs officers already hold law enforcement authority, and the proposed legislation primarily serves to unify the positions of customs officers and agricultural quarantine personnel under a single division. All personnel have completed the required training at the Northern Marianas College as well as during academy, so the primary remaining step is the passage of the proposed legislation. Additionally, the proposed legislation addresses disparities in compensation, as agricultural quarantine inspectors currently earn several thousand dollars less than their customs counterparts, creating morale issues. Deputy Director Deleon Guerrero shared that once the proposed legislation is enacted and the division begins generating self-sustaining revenues, these compensation disparities can be addressed promptly.

Your Committee further questioned whether or not the division has a certified veterinarian as it is listed as an entry requirement within the proposed legislation that a permit be issued by a certified state veterinarian of the animal health industry. Deputy Director Deleon

Guerrero shared that the Division of Customs and Quarantine does not currently have a dedicated veterinary staff on board, as this function primarily falls under the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR). State veterinarians are authorized under current law to enforce quarantine regulations while performing their regular duties, and the division works closely with DLNR's Animal Health Section. Quarantine officers handle the issuance of permits, coordinating with trained personnel from DLNR who assist in determining permit approvals. Deputy Director Deleon Guerrero also shared that biosecurity responsibilities span multiple agencies within the Commonwealth, requiring interagency coordination.

Your Committee further asked if the proposed legislation would require the presence of Customs during any inter-island shipments. Deputy Director Deleon Guerrero shared that while inter-island inspections are limited, the Division of Customs and Quarantine conducts targeted biosecurity inspections to prevent the spread of invasive species. Quarantine officers thoroughly inspect vessels and shipments that may carry coconut rhinoceros beetles before they reach Rota or Tinian to protect these islands from introducing harmful pests. After deliberation, no member objected to the passage of Senate Bill No. 24-48 in its current form.

C) Legislative History:

Senate Bill No. 24-48 was formally introduced by Senator Jude U. Hofschneider on September 30, 2025. On December 16, 2025 Senate Bill No. 24-48 was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law for disposition.

D) Public Hearing and Comment:

1. **Public Hearing.** No public hearing was scheduled for Senate Bill No. 24-48. However, a committee meeting, which is open to the public, was held to receive written and oral testimonies on any proposed legislation appearing on the agenda. See below for further details.
2. **Committee Meeting.** The proposed legislation made its first appearance during the scheduled committee meeting on March 18, 2026, in which your Committee deliberated on the provisions stated in the proposed legislation and the comments provided to the Committee for review.

The respective Committee Meeting notices and agendas were officially posted on various legislative forums and social media sites in accordance with the Open Government Act to invite members of the general public to provide comments as indicated under Item No. III. Public Comment of the Committee Agenda. Public comments offered during the Committee Meeting are as follows:

1. Jose Mafnas, Director, Division of Customs and Quarantine, Department of Finance

2. James Deleon Guerrero, Deputy Director, Division of Customs and Quarantine, Department of Finance
3. Written Comment. Your Committee requested for comments on the proposed legislation. To date, the status of comments received from the following government agencies are as follows:
 1. James C. Deleon Guerrero, Deputy Director, Division of Customs and Biosecurity, Department of Finance - *letter received on January 31, 2026*

E) Estimated Fiscal Cost:

The enactment of Senate Bill No. 24-48 will result in additional costs to the CNMI government as it would require all personnel transferred from the Agricultural Quarantine Section to be compensated on the Customs Services pay scales. However, the proposed legislation also grants authority to the Division of Customs and Biosecurity to collect and retain all fines, fees, and statutory penalties imposed at ports of entry. These funds are restricted from reprogramming and are dedicated to training, operations, and personnel costs and may offset expenditures.

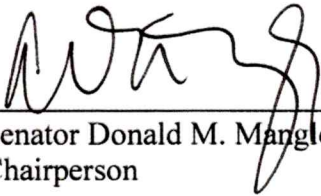
F) Summary of Committee Amendments:

Your Committee agreed that no further amendments were needed.

III. CONCLUSION:

Your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of the proposed legislation and recommends the passage of Senate Bill No. 24-48 in its current form.

Respectfully submitted,



Senator Donald M. Manglona
Chairperson

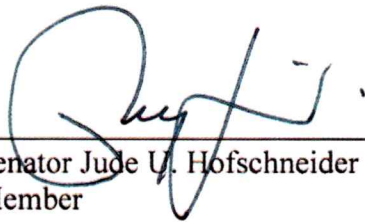
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro
Vice Chairperson

Senator Celina R. Babauta
Member



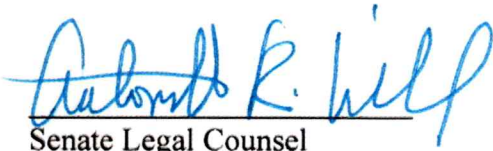
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo
Member

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz
Member



Senator Jude U. Hofschneider
Member

Reviewed by:



Senate Legal Counsel

Attachments:

- Letter from James C. Deleon Guerrero, Deputy Director, Division of Customs and Biosecurity, Department of Finance - *letter received on January 31, 2026*



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND
GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

JOEL C. CAMACHO
CHAIRPERSON

Adopted - 7/26/2026 vV

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-60

DATE: June 25, 2026

RE: SENATE BILL No. 24-48

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:

Senate Bill No. 24-48: "To establish a Division of Customs and Biosecurity within the Department of Finance for the purposes enforcing all laws at the ports of entry and that is responsible for the inspection and clearance of containers, cargo, baggage related to customs and biosecurity at the ports of entry, and other matters related to border security."

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that Senate Bill No. 24-48, be passed by the House in its current form.

TO THE CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*
DATE *7/26/2026* TIME *1:30 pm*

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of Senate Bill No. 24-48 is to formally establish the Division of Customs and Biosecurity within the Department of Finance by merging the Agricultural Quarantine Section into the Division of Customs, authorize the Division to enforce all laws at the Commonwealth's ports of entry, and vest it with responsibility for inspection and clearance of containers, cargo, and baggage for customs and biosecurity purposes, while classifying its personnel as law enforcement officers to strengthen border protection and prevent the entry of contraband and harmful biological agents.

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that Executive Order 2021-009 transferred the Agricultural Quarantine Section from the Department of Lands and Natural Resources to the Division of Customs Services within the Department of Finance, redesignating the unit as the Division of Customs and Quarantine. As part of that transfer, all records, property, and personnel were moved to the Division while employees retained their existing classified or excepted service status. The two entities now operate cooperatively, sharing facilities and functions to protect the Commonwealth's borders.

Your Committee finds that biosecurity encompasses measures that restrict the movement of potential disease carriers and agents, including people, livestock, wildlife, and other vectors, and that these precautions are intended to prevent exposure to harmful biological threats. Recognizing biosecurity alongside customs enforcement reflects the dual scope of responsibilities at the ports of entry.

Your Committee finds that adopting the name Division of Customs and Biosecurity appropriately reflects the equal importance of customs and biosecurity functions, and that personnel performing these duties should be classified and empowered as law enforcement officers with authorities comparable to customs officers to ensure effective enforcement at ports of entry.

Your Committee finds that, since the organizational merger, the Division of Customs and Quarantine has actively safeguarded the Commonwealth by identifying and preventing the importation of contraband, prohibited items, and harmful agents. However, statutory legislation is necessary to finalize the merger, formally rename the unit as the Division of Customs and Biosecurity, and ensure the Division is fully authorized to carry out its border protection and biosecurity responsibilities.

E. Public Comments/Public Hearing:

No public comments were solicited, and none were submitted.

E. Legislative History:

On September 30, 2025, Senator Jude U. Hofschneider introduced Senate Bill No. 24-48. On December 16, 2025, Senate Bill No. 24-48 was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Government, and Law for disposition; it was subsequently passed in the Senate on May 1, 2026. The bill was then transmitted to the House of Representatives, received on May 6, 2026, and referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations for disposition on May 22, 2026. On June 25, 2026, the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations met and, after considerable discussion, recommended that Senate Bill No. 24-48 be passed by the House in its current form.

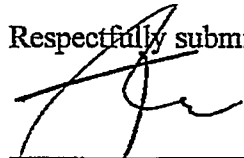
F. Cost Benefit Analysis:

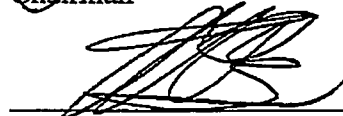
The enactment of Senate Bill No. 24-48 will increase CNMI government expenditures by requiring staff transferred from the Agricultural Quarantine Section to be paid according to Customs Services pay scales. Offset against these costs, the bill authorizes the Division of Customs and Biosecurity to collect and retain fines, fees, and statutory penalties assessed at ports of entry; those receipts are restricted from reprogramming and earmarked for training, operations, and personnel, which may partially mitigate the additional expenditures.

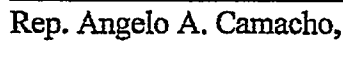
III. CONCLUSION:

Your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of Senate Bill No. 24-48, and recommends its passage.

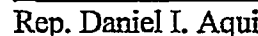
Respectfully submitted,

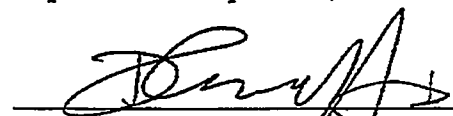


Rep. Joel Camacho, Chairman
Chairman

Rep. Vincent S. Aldan, Member

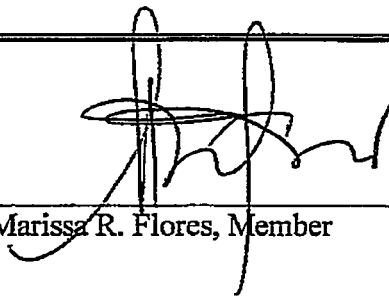
Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member

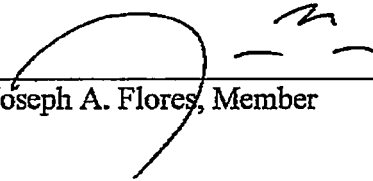
Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao
Vice Chairman

Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Member

Rep. Diego V.F. Camacho, Member

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Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Member

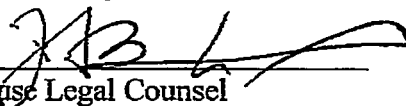

Rep. Joseph A. Flores, Member

Rep. Julie A. Ogo, Member

Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Member


Rep. Ralph W. Yumul, Member

Reviewed by:


House Legal Counsel

Date: 6/25/26