

**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.

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

1           **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act may be cited as the “Chamorro and Carolinian  
2 Language Education Act of 2025.”

3           **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that Article 15, Section  
4 1(a) of the CNMI Constitution makes it clear that the educational system shall recognize  
5 the distinct and unique cultural heritage and indigenous way of life of the people and  
6 shall be committed to providing for the language needs of the people and the preservation  
7 of their cultural integrity within a global community.

8           On August 17, 2024, the Nineteenth CNMI Youth Congress adopted Youth  
9 Congress Bill No. 19-01, YCD 1, “To require all public schools within the CNMI:  
10 elementary, middle and high schools to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro  
11 and/or Carolinian languages.” In their findings, the Youth Congress acknowledged that  
12 there is a limited number of residents in the CNMI who fluently speak Chamorro and/or  
13 Carolinian. Further, the Youth Congress found that “[s]aving these indigenous languages  
14 is crucial to ensure the protection of the cultural dignity of our indigenous people, and  
15 safeguard our traditional heritage.”

16           The Legislature further recognizes that despite the CNMI Public School System’s  
17 (PSS) constitutional mandate to support Chamorro and Carolinian bilingual programs,  
18 resources allocated to bilingual teacher compensation, instructional contact hours, and  
19 instructional materials remain inequitable. Some bilingual teachers make as little as  
20 \$19,000 per year and are treated as teaching assistants despite performing the work of a  
21 full-time teacher, like planning lessons, developing curriculum, and leading classrooms.  
22 Therefore, it is the purpose of this Act to address issues relating to the CNMI Public

1 School System’s Chamorro & Carolinian language requirements; school personnel; and  
2 salary parity for people who hold Chamorro and/or Carolinian bilingual language and  
3 culture certificates.

4 **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision  
5 Commission, the following provisions are enacted:

6 **“§ 101. Chamorro & Carolinian Language Requirements.**

7 (a) One full year of Chamorro or Carolinian language classes will be required for  
8 high school students to graduate, and middle school students to be promoted. The Public  
9 School System (PSS) shall offer at least two years of Chamorro and Carolinian language  
10 classes for those students who wish to continue instruction after the first year.

11 (b) PSS shall hire individuals who are qualified to teach either language at the  
12 level in which they are assigned. In addition to other PSS teacher qualification  
13 requirements, in order to be qualified to teach a Chamorro or Carolinian language class at  
14 PSS, the individual must hold a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture  
15 Certificate as provided in § 102.

16 (c) Chamorro and Carolinian language classes shall be counted as a foreign  
17 language credit as a prerequisite for graduation from high school. PSS shall implement  
18 Chamorro and Carolinian language classes within their curriculum by School Year 2025-  
19 26.

20 **§ 102. Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture Certificates.**

21 (a) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Northern Marianas  
22 College, shall develop a 16-week academic program specifically designed for Chamorro  
23 and/or Carolinian bilingual language and culture teachers to introduce the fundamental  
24 theories and practices of teaching and learning, educational psychology, inclusive  
25 practices for students with learning needs, instructional strategies, and classroom  
26 management, along with a comprehensive examination of the rationale and methods for  
27 curriculum planning, including integrating curriculum content through the use of  
28 thematic approaches.

1 (b) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Chamorro-Carolinian  
2 Language Policy Commission, Carolinian Affairs Office, and the Indigenous Affairs  
3 Office, shall develop proficiency tests designed to assess the fluency of an individual's  
4 Chamorro and/or Carolinian language skills and their knowledge of cultural and  
5 traditional practices.

6 (c) Upon successful completion of the program described in subsection (a) along  
7 with passing the Chamorro and/or Carolinian proficiency tests described in subsection  
8 (b), the State Board of Education shall issue the successful individual a Chamorro and/or  
9 Carolinian Language and Culture Certificate. Holding a Chamorro and/or Carolinian  
10 Language and Culture Certificate indicates that the person is proficient in the Chamorro  
11 and/or Carolinian language and culture and has met the requirements stated in § 101(b) to  
12 teach Chamorro and/or Carolinian language classes at PSS. A baccalaureate degree is not  
13 required for a person to be issued a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture  
14 Certificate.

15 **§ 103. Annual Salary for Chamorro & Carolinian Teachers.**

16 Any person who receives a Chamorro and/or Carolinian language and culture  
17 certificate in accordance with § 101 shall receive a minimum annual salary equivalent to  
18 Pay Level VI, Step 03 in accordance with NMIAC § 60-30.2-215 (Alignment with PSS  
19 Classification and Salary Schedule).”

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

25 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not  
26 be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under  
27 statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes.  
28 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or  
29 pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating,


1 or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in  
2 existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

3 **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
4 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

Date: 1/22/25

Introduced By:   
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Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senate Legal Counsel