

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To establish a Driver's Education Program within the Public School System, in conjunction with the Traffic Division of the Department of Public Safety, and for other purposes.

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

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds and declares that motor
2 vehicle accidents remain one of the leading causes of death and injury among teenagers
3 in the United States and its territories. Research has consistently demonstrated that
4 comprehensive driver's education programs significantly reduce the risk of traffic
5 crashes involving young and inexperienced drivers. In certain jurisdictions, young
6 drivers continue to represent a disproportionate share of traffic citations, collisions, and
7 fatalities. Despite the critical importance of safe driving skills, access to formal driver's
8 education remains limited for many students due to financial constraints, program
9 availability, or a shortage of certified instructors.

10 The Legislature recognizes that providing a publicly administered and
11 standardized driver's education program within the public school system promotes
12 equity by ensuring that all students, regardless of income or background, have access to
13 essential safety training. Furthermore, collaboration with the Department of Public
14 Safety will ensure that the instructional curriculum aligns with current traffic laws and
15 enforcement practices, thereby promoting consistency between education and public
16 safety messaging. A structured driver's education program is not only an essential public
17 safety initiative, but also an investment in the long-term well-being and productivity of
18 the community. Accordingly, it is in the public interest to establish a coordinated,

1 school-based driver's education program administered by the Public School System in
2 conjunction with the Traffic Division of the Department of Public Safety.

3 Therefore; the purpose of this Act is to establish a comprehensive Driver's
4 Education Program for public high school students, administered by the Public School
5 System (PSS) in collaboration with the Traffic Division of the Department of Public
6 Safety (DPS), to promote roadway safety, reduce traffic-related injuries and fatalities,
7 and prepare young drivers to operate motor vehicles lawfully and responsibly.

8 **Section 2. Enactment.** Subject to the codification by the Commonwealth Law
9 Revision, the following is enacted to read:

10 **“Chapter XX. PSS Driver's Education Program.**

11 **§ 101. Definitions.**

12 For purposes of this Act, unless otherwise indicated:

13 (a) “PSS” means the Public School System of the Commonwealth of the
14 Northern Mariana Islands;

15 (b) “DPS” means the CNMI Department of Public Safety;

16 (c) “Traffic Division” means the division of DPS responsible for highway safety,
17 driver education programs, and enforcement of motor vehicle laws;

18 (d) “Driver's Education Program” means a standardized instructional program
19 consisting of classroom instruction and practical driving experience, designed to prepare
20 students for responsible vehicle operation and licensure;

21 (e) “Eligible student” means a public high school student enrolled in Grade 10
22 or higher, and who has attained the minimum age of fifteen (15) years.

23 **§ 102. Establishment of the Driver's Education Program.**

24 (a) There is hereby established within the Public School System a Driver's
25 Education Program, which shall be made available to all eligible students enrolled in
26 public high schools.

27 (b) The Program shall be developed, implemented, and monitored by PSS in
28 coordination with the Traffic Division of DPS, and shall include:

29 (1) Not less than thirty (30) hours of classroom-based instruction;

1 (2) Not less than six (6) hours of behind-the-wheel instruction conducted
2 by a certified instructor;

3 (3) Supplementary instruction in traffic law, safe driving practices,
4 defensive driving techniques, impaired and distracted driving awareness, and
5 driver responsibilities;

6 (4) Access to simulated driving instruction, as resources and facilities
7 permit.

8 **§ 103. Duties of the Public School System.**

9 The Public School System shall:

10 (a) Integrate the Driver's Education Program into the high school curriculum,
11 either as an elective or required course;

12 (b) Employ or contract with instructors certified in Driver's Education as
13 approved by DPS standards;

14 (c) Procure and maintain instructional materials, training vehicles, and necessary
15 equipment for program operation;

16 (d) Coordinate class schedules to ensure program accessibility to all eligible
17 students;

18 (e) Maintain records of student enrollment, attendance, and program completion.

19 **§ 104. Duties of the Department of Public Safety.**

20 The Department of Public Safety, through its Traffic Division, shall:

21 (a) Provide curriculum guidance and periodic review of instructional standards
22 and materials;

23 (b) Approve and certify Driver's Education instructors;

24 (c) Monitor program implementation and conduct periodic evaluations of
25 instructional practices and compliance with applicable safety standards;

26 (d) Provide access to DPS resources, including manuals, digital content, and
27 public safety officers for guest instruction or outreach;

28 (e) Assist in the coordination of licensing examinations or learner's permit
29 testing for program participants.

1 **§ 105. Funding.**

2 (a) The implementation and operation of the Driver's Education Program shall
3 be funded through the PSS annual appropriations by the Legislature.

4 (b) The Public School System and the Department of Public Safety are
5 authorized to seek and utilize:

6 (1) Federal and local grants for traffic safety education;

7 (2) Donations and sponsorships from community organizations or
8 businesses, provided such arrangements do not compromise program integrity.

9 **§ 106. Program Implementation Schedule.**

10 (a) The Driver's Education Program shall commence one high school pilot
11 program in each senatorial district for the School Year 2026-2027.

12 (b) Full implementation across all public high schools shall be completed within
13 three (3) years of the effective date.

14 (c) PSS shall promulgate rules and procedures within 60 days upon this Act
15 becoming law.

16 (d) PSS may charge a reasonable fee for program and administrative cost to
17 administer the program.

18 **§ 107. Annual Reports and Accountability.**

19 (a) The Public School System shall submit an annual report to the Presiding
20 Officers of the Legislature not later than ninety (90) days after the end of each academic
21 year, detailing:

22 (1) Student enrollment and completion rates;

23 (2) Budgetary expenditures and funding sources;

24 (3) Program outcomes and performance assessments;

25 (4) Recommendations for improvements.

26 (b) The Department of Public Safety shall conduct and submit an annual program
27 audit, including instructor certification compliance and curriculum review.”

28 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any
29 such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of

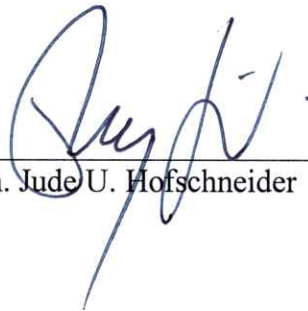
1 competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to
2 persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected
3 thereby.

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

11 **Section 5. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the
12 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

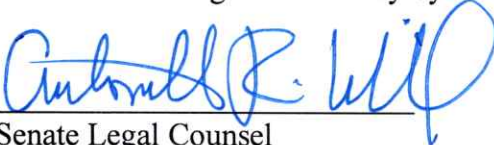
Prefiled:

Date: 9/15/2025

Introduced By: 

Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:


Senate Legal Counsel