



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION, 2021

## LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL

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3<sup>rd</sup> Day, Second Regular Session

Thursday, September 23, 2021

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*The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its Third Day, Second Regular Session on Thursday, September 23, 2021 at 1:33 p.m., in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.*

*The Honorable Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez, Speaker of the House, presided.*

*A moment of silence was observed.*

### ROLL CALL

*The Clerk called the roll and seventeen members were present; Representatives Joseph A. Flores and Richard T. Lizama were absent and excused.*

*The Chair called for a short recess.*

*The House recessed at 1:36 p.m.*

### RECESS

*The House reconvened at 1:50 p.m.*

*The Chair directed the members to item II, Public Comments.*

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following individual made comments:

Ms. Monique Sablan, Managing Director – CNMI Cannabis Commission

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Ms. Sablan. And if you don't mind, if you'd like to submit your written comments to the Sergeant at Arms for our record purposes and reference. Floor's still open for Public Comments. Okay. I see that there are no public comments.

We'll move down to item III, Adoption of Journals. We have none. So, we'll move down to item IV, Introduction of Bills and I now recognize Representative Leepan Guerrero.

### **ADOPTION OF JOURNALS**

*None*

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

#### ***House Bills:***

*The following bills were officially introduced by the author of each bill and referred to its appropriate committee by the Chair.*

#### **H. B. NO. 22-78**

To clarify the powers of the CNMI Cannabis Commission and make needed changes to the Commonwealth Code to support adequate development of the Cannabis Industry in the Commonwealth.

**REP. JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO** of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Angel A. Demapan, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, and Ralph N. Yumul)

**(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CANNIBIS AND TOURISM)**

#### **H. B. NO. 22-79**

To allow for right hand drive vehicles that are twenty-five (25) years or older to be imported and registered in the CNMI; and for other purpose.

**REP. RICHARD T. LIZAMA** of Saipan, Precinct 5 (*for himself*)

**(Introduced by Representative Donald M. Manglona)**

**(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS)**

*The Chair directed the members to House Local Bills.*

#### ***House Local Bills:***

*The following bills were officially introduced by the author of each bill.*

#### **H. L. B. NO. 22-22**

To amend the Saipan Official Zoning Map sheet 05 of 29 to rezone certain districts to “Mixed Commercial”; and for other purposes.

**REP. JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO** of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*)

#### **H. L. B. NO. 22-23**

To appropriate the sum of One Million dollars (1,000,000.00) from the exclusive gaming annual license fees allotted to the First Senatorial District under 4 CMC § 2307(a); and for other purposes.

**REP. DONALD M. MANGLONA** of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself*)

***House Legislative Initiatives: None***

*The Chair directed the members to item V, Introduction of Resolutions and recognized Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta.*

## **INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS**

***House Resolutions: None***

***House Joint Resolutions:***

*Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta officially introduced the following resolution and request that the resolution be introduced as a Committee of the Whole and to place on the Resolution Calendar:*

### **H. J. R. NO. 22-11**

To condemn the Government of Japan's decision to dump nuclear waste into the Pacific Ocean, oppose any other government's actions related to nuclear testing, storage, and waste disposal in the Pacific, and reaffirm everyone's fundamental right to a safe and healthy living environment.

**REP. SHEILA J. BABAUTA** of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for herself*, Representatives Vicente C. Camacho, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai)

*There was no objection; the Chair placed House Resolution 22-11 on the Resolution Calendar.*

***House Commemorative Resolutions: None***

***House Concurrent Resolutions: None***

*The Chair directed the members to item XIII, Reports of Special and Conference Committees and recognized the Floor Leader.*

## **MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

*No action on the following:*

GOV. COMM. 22-66: (9/2/2021) Certifying and granting approval for Ms. Keisha Blaise, Assistant Attorney General, at the Office of the Attorney General to receive an annual salary of \$70,000. [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-67: (9/2/2021) Certifying and granting approval for Ms. Leslie Ann Healer, Assistant Attorney General, at the Office of the Attorney General to receive an annual salary of \$70,000. [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-68: (9/2/2021) Certifying and granting approval for Mr. Steven M. Mullin, Biologist, at the Division of Fish & Wildlife, DLNR to receive an annual salary of \$70,000. [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-69: (9/3/2021) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 22-11, D1 (*To re-appropriate \$40,000 allotted under Tinian Local Law 20-15,*

*Section 2(g) to the Tinian Municipal Scholarship Board; and for other purposes.*). Became **Tinian Local Law 22-03** [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-70: (9/3/2021) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 22-14, D1 (*To re-appropriate \$62,996 under Tinian Local Law 22-2, Section 2(b); and for other purposes.*). Became **Tinian Local Law 22-04** [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-71: (9/3/2021) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 22-16, D1 (*To appropriate \$78,000 from revenues collected from poker fees for the Second Senatorial District; and for other purposes.*). Became **Tinian Local Law 22-05** [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-72: (received 9/14/2021) **Executive Order 2021-17—RENEWAL—Declaration of State of Public Health Emergency and continued Declaration of State of Significant Emergency establishing response, quarantine, and preventive containment measures concerning coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); and RENEWAL—Order directing the Homeland Security & Emergency Management Office through the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force in partnership with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation to undertake necessary COVID-19 containment measures by means of the development of Emergency Directives to protect the health and safety of the public.**

GOV. COMM. 22-73: (received 9/14/2021) **Executive Order 2021-18—RENEWING AUTHORITY—Order authorizing the Secretary of Finance to reprogram or transfer funds from accounts of any department, agency, office, board, commission, corporation, instrumentality or other entity of all branches of the Commonwealth Government in order to meet the threat of COVID-19.**

GOV. COMM. 22-74: (received 9/14/2021) **Executive Order 2021-19—RENEWAL—Declaration of State of Public Health Emergency and continued Declaration of State of Significant Emergency establishing response, quarantine, and preventive containment measures concerning coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); and RENEWAL—Order directing the Homeland Security & Emergency Management Office through the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force in partnership with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation to undertake necessary COVID-19 containment measures by means of the development of Emergency Directives to protect the health and safety of the public.**

GOV. COMM. 22-75: (9/14/2021) Certifying and granting approval for Mr. Christian K. Johnson, Assistant Attorney General, at the Office of the Attorney General to receive an annual salary of \$70,000. [*For info*]

GOV. COMM. 22-76: (9/16/2021) Certifying and granting approval for Mr. Carl Allan F. Dela Cruz, Assistant Attorney General, at the Office of the Attorney General to receive an annual salary of \$70,000. [*For info*]

## **SENATE COMMUNICATIONS**

*No action on the following:*

SEN. COMM. 22-44: (8/31/2021) Informing the House of the Senate’s Conferees to the Conference Committee on H. B. NO. 22-74, HD3, SD1, entitled, “*To make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent*

*programs, and to provide budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2022; and for other purposes.” [Sen. Victor B. Hocog, Chair; Sen. Justo S. Quitugua Vice Chair; Sen. Teresita A. Santos, Member; Alternate Member: Sen. Karl R. King-Nabors]. [For info]*

SEN. COMM. 22-45: (9/14/2021) Returning H. B. No. 22-12, entitled, “*To amend 4 CMC § 51420 (b) to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to establish and promulgate reasonable registration and permitting fees through adopted regulations; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on September 14, 2021. [For info-Transmitted to Governor on September 16, 2021]

SEN. COMM. 22-46: (9/14/2021) Returning H. B. No. 22-28, HD1, entitled, “*To rename the structure for the Center for Living Independently in the CNMI to “The Lydia D. Igitol Center for Living Independently in the CNMI”; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on September 14, 2021. [For info-Transmitted to Governor on September 16, 2021]

SEN. COMM. 22-47: (9/14/2021) Returning H. B. No. 22-31, HS1, entitled, “*To authorize the Department of Public Lands to issue encroachment permits and charge fees for the use of the public lands located within 150 feet of the high-water mark.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on September 14, 2021. [For info-Transmitted to Governor on September 16, 2021]

SEN. COMM. 22-48: (9/14/2021) Returning H. B. 22-2, entitled, “*To amend the Commonwealth Code to authorize civil claims for child sexual abuse to be commenced at any time; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate with amendments on September 14, 2021, in the form of **H. B. No. 22-2, SD1**. [For action on Senate amendments]

SEN. COMM. 22-49: (9/14/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-19, SD1, entitled, “*To require all gas service stations to provide to the public free compressed air, a gauge for measuring air pressure, and tap water; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on September 14, 2021. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 22-50: (9/14/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-20, SD1, entitled, “*To establish the Hunting Act of 2021 for the Commonwealth, and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on September 14, 2021. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 22-51: (9/14/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-22, SS1, entitled, “*To amend the provisions pertaining to village and agricultural homesteads in Rota, Tinian, and Saipan, and to specifically prohibit the Department of Public Lands from revoking a village or agricultural homestead permit after it is approved and issued because the applicant met all the requirements, including that the applicant has no interest in land at the time the permit was approved; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on September 14, 2021. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 22-52: (9/14/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-37, SD1, entitled, “*To amend Chapter 4, Division 6 of Title of the Commonwealth Code relating to bail proceedings.*”, which was passed by the Senate on September 14, 2021. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 22-53: (9/14/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-38, SD1, entitled, “*To amend Crimes and Criminal Procedure Code definitions of dangerous*

*weapon and serious bodily injury.”, which was passed by the Senate on September 14, 2021. [For action]*

SEN. COMM. 22-54: (9/14/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-44, SD1, entitled, “*To authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety to work with private business owners to install video surveillance cameras directed toward the public right-of-way in support of the CNMI’s reporting system; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on September 14, 2021. [For action]

## **HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS**

*No action on the following:*

HSE. COMM. 22-32: (8/31/2021) From Minority Leader Angel A. Demapan, informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on personal leave on September 1, 2021—September 8, 2021 and request to be excused from any and all scheduled meetings or sessions during his absence. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 22-33: (8/31/2021) From Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul, informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on official and personal business on September 1, 2021—September 16, 2021 and request to be excused from any and all scheduled meetings or sessions during his absence. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 22-34: (9/9/2021) From Representative Lizama, informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on official and personal business on September 14, 2021—October 16, 2021 and request to be excused from any and all scheduled meetings or sessions during his absence. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 22-35: (9/17/2021) From Representative Flores, informing the Speaker that he will be extending his leave of absence from September 20, 2021—September 28, 2021 and request to be excused from any and all scheduled meetings or sessions during his absence. [For info]

## **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIAL BRANCH**

None

## **COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES**

*No action on the following:*

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 22-26: (8/16/2021) From the Secretary, Department of Finance (DOF) submitting *FY 2021—Third Quarter Financial Report*. [For info]

## **MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS**

*No action on the following:*

MISC. COMM. 22-61: (8/31/2021) From the CNMI Chamorro-Carolinian Language Policy Commission (CCLPC) re: *Mandatory requirements according to Public Law 15-*

*96 that mandates that the CCLPC provide all CNMI government agencies and make recommendation to the legislature on policies governing the usage of the Chamorro and Carolinian language in the government sector. [For info]*

MISC. COMM. 22-62: (8/31/2021) From the LB Director re: *ARPA Expenditure Plan as allotted to the Legislative Bureau. [For info]*

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

*No action on the following:*

**S. C. R. NO. 22-27:** Reporting on S. B. No. 22-3, SD1, entitled: “To amend 1 CMC § 2892(1) to exempt the Northern Marianas Technical Institute, as established by Public Law 20-92, from the oversight of the Office of Grants Management and State Clearinghouse; and for other purposes.” *Your House Committee on Education recommends that the House pass S. B. No. 22-3, SD1 in its current form.*

**S. C. R. NO. 22-28:** Reporting on S. B. No. 22-18, SD1, entitled: “To waive the Northern Marianas College tuition for a veteran with 30 percent or greater service-connected disability; and for other purposes.” *Your House Committee on Education recommends that the House pass the bill in the form of S. B. No. 22-18, SD1, HD1.*

## **REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES**

*The Floor Leader made a motion to adopt the following committee report:*

**C. C. R. NO. 22-1:** Reporting on H. B. NO. 22-74, HD3, SD1, entitled, “To make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent programs, and to provide budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2022; and for other purposes.” *Your Conference Committee recommends passage of the bill in the form of H. B. 22-74, HD3, SD1, CCS1.*

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: A motion has been made by the Floor Leader to a adopt Conference Committee Report 22-1 and it has been seconded. Discussion on the floor? Recognize Chairman Manglona.

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon colleagues. Just to give you a brief explanation on the actions that the committee has made, but before I do so I just want to take this opportunity to thank the conferees from both the House and the Senate, the Legal Counsels, the LA’s, Sergeant-at-Arms IT and all those who played a role in the planning and preparation for the passage of this conference committee report, which addresses the concerns that the House had with the Senate’s version of the budget. We took all amendments into consideration and in the end we adopted changes that we were all satisfied with. And so with that said, I’d just like to go over the changes that we made and we’ll start off with the reallocation of the \$2.6 million that was taken from CHCC. And so, all of that amount, the conferees were able to put back to close to \$1.08 million and how that’s broken down is we took about \$3,889 from the judicial branch and returned that back to CHCC. There was a hundred thousand that

was set aside for the forensic study. However, with further discussions, it seems like this will cost more than that probably close to around \$500,000 and so we felt that we could use this fund and give it back to CHCC. We took out the \$50,000.00 from the Governor's discretionary account so that we can make that equal with the Lieutenant Governor's discretionary count. We took out \$101,000 from the political status commission. We, we just felt that we needed to see what the final report was if there was any. And so, this is something that we can revisit next fiscal year. We took out \$735,942 from the CNMI Scholarship Office. We want it to not that with the combined general fund and ARPA that they were allocated they had more than enough to increase their aid for the current year, as well as next fiscal year, make the necessary renovations that they had proposed, purchase the equipment that they needed, and this will still leave them with about \$2.5 million over what they had initially proposed and that could very well be used to fund their awards the following fiscal year. And then \$92,420 from the AG's Office. Again, just bringing them down to what they had proposed. And so, with all of that combined, that should come out to around \$1.08 Million. Now in regards to the budget provisions members we made several changes. We removed the language that had allowed for salary adjustments for government employees. And, you know, this would make it in line with what the current law states on any salary increases overtime, supplemental pay, premium pay, extra pay, other such payments. While there might be some confusion and how this may affect WGI or any other payments that are allowed I just wanted to clarify that by removing this language, this is essentially reverts back to what has already been established by law. And we also took out the salary adjustment from the judicial branch. This was the \$3,889 that I mentioned earlier. We took out the hundred thousand provision on the a hundred thousand for the forensic study and we just gave that back to CHCC. And then we provided additional language for the payment to a former representative that will require legal review and concurrence with the AG and Secretary of Finance. So, with that said now that we have this product that both houses has agreed upon, I do want to point out the work that the committee has done to ensure that there still is accountability and transparency in the way these funds will be spent. We included provisions that requires quarterly reporting. We emphasize the overtime payments and that those are only restricted to those who are eligible to receive them. We ensured additional funds were given to CHCC, emergency powers are limited to the executive branch and we supported the Senate with providing additional funds to PSS for textbooks and additional funds to NMTI. Most importantly, the volume for which we do not have control over. We did approve the Governor's spending plan and therefore any changes made to the Governor spending plan will require a joint resolution by both House and the Senate. And so, Mr. Speaker and colleagues we recommend the adoption of the concurrent resolution or the concurrent committee report. I'm sorry, House Conference Committee Report and we welcome any questions or concerns that the members may have.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Manglona. Floor is still open for discussion. Recognize Representative Joel Camacho.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Thank you, Chairman and conference committee members for the product before us today. Still kind of concerned about the scholarship however, have you guys maybe spoken to the administrator and they're fine with this?

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Well, we have spoken to them and so initially the committee went over their initial proposal, but after the scholarship office got better understanding of how the ARPA money will be allocated they submitted a revised budget



proposal which talked about the increased awards and all of that. And so, with that and based on the July 1<sup>st</sup> submission, we noticed that there was an increase in ARPA allocated to the scholarship fund and so we wanted to make sure that their needs are still met. And as I stated earlier with the July 1<sup>st</sup> submission, this would still give them an additional around \$2.5 million.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: I believe it was about \$5 million for the fiscal year 2022 inclusive of ARPA. So that's for fiscal year 2022, is there another batch of ARPA to cover fiscal year 2023?

Representative Donald M. Manglona: No, but the ARPA expires in December 2024.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Okay. So, there is the answer's yes. Then there is another –

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Not another batch, but from whatever is proposed for next fiscal year, that funding source will not expire until December 2024.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: 2024. Okay. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Representative Joel. I now recognize Representative Angel Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just to get some clarification from the Chair. One of the contentions that I think we unanimously agreed on was the subsidy for CHC, and I'm glad to see that there's at least over a million dollars reverted back to the subsidy account, but I guess along the lines of colleague Joel's question, was the CEO or anyone from CHC consulted by the conference committee in arriving at this figure?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Chairman Manglona.

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Thank you. I think Representative Christina Sablan had direct contact with CHCC. Would you like to share?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you leader Demapan for raising the issue. We were in communication with the CEO of the Healthcare Corporation and although, you know, of course there was some disappointment that the final figure was not what we were initially proposing in the House. Our hope is that, I mean, \$1 Million is still better than the initial \$86,000 that had been proposed for the CHC subsidy. And, you know, our hope is that there would be other opportunities to increase the funds that we allocate to our health care corporation, either at the local delegation level or through the raising of taxes, for example, the tobacco taxation bill that is pending in the Senate. and I did reach out to our Senate counterparts to inquire about that as well. And if I may just continue since I did want to address the CHCC issue as the Chairman has noted funding for CHCC was one of the biggest concerns on the House side. When we came to the conference committee and it was a concern that was articulated by members of this body from both sides of the aisle, I think unanimously as leader Demapan noted. And so, what we brought to the conference table was that, you know, there was this broad consensus CHCC needed a subsidy that was greater than the

\$86,000 that the Administration had proposed and that the Senate had initially supported. And what we explained during the conference discussions was that although CHCC does receive some federal funding much of that funding is restricted and although there have been some significant improvements in billings and collections, CHCC still must treat everyone who comes to the hospital for care, regardless of their ability to pay and we do have a very high rate of uninsured and under-insured citizens living in the Commonwealth and what we expect, you know, we've been very lucky in a sense during this pandemic because Medicaid presumptive eligibility has applied and a lot more people have signed up for Medicaid who wouldn't otherwise be eligible, but Medicaid presumptive eligibility will end at some point when the national emergency ends it will expire and then CHCC will have to deal with that additional burden as well. You know, possibly in this upcoming fiscal year We were also very cognizant of other uncertainties facing our healthcare system in this fiscal year. Not least of which is the transfer of administration of the off-island Medical Referral Program to CHCC, which this budget recognizes in which we have a pending legislation to make that more permanent. And so, you know, after discussion with our Senate counterparts and we were continuing communications with CHCC in the end, we agreed to meet in the middle. Maintaining some of the Senate's proposed reallocations to other business units in the government while restoring a little over a million dollars to CHCC. So, \$1 million is a good start. It's definitely better than the \$86,000. I do believe that we have to continue to make greater investments in our healthcare system as we have seen what they can do and have been able to do when they have had consistent and stable funding. And I'm hopeful that, you know, with these new and improved funding sources, whether through updates to our tobacco tax laws and other revenue generating laws or legislation as well as appropriations by our respective local delegations, we can start to realize these greater and much needed investments in our one and only healthcare system in the Commonwealth. And then just on a final note, I wanted to just remark on how smooth and cordial our conference session was. I think a lot of that can be attributed to the leadership of Chairman Manglona who conducted very timely. Started early in the budget process and afforded opportunities for practically all of the departments and agencies across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to come and present their case for the budget needs that they have in this upcoming year. And we do appreciate that the Senate, our counterparts in the Senate seem to recognize all the diligent work that went into those hearings. And for the most part by the time we came together, we found that we did agree on most items at the budget even before the conference negotiation started. So, thank you with that I yield. I'm also happy to answer any questions.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. Representative Tina Sablan. Yes. Recognized.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Chair Tina. And the reason why that I bring that up and I appreciate the extended response he gave because I was leading into medical referral. Having known that this budget incorporates the transfer of Medical Referral to CHC and knowing also that almost every year in the past decade at least, Medical Referral has been the largest contributor of the government deficit. And so, transferring a guaranteed deficit program to CHC while reducing their subsidy is very concerning, but I appreciate that the health committee will be keeping a close track on the healthcare issue and the medical referral issue so that we can figure out a way to make sure that it's adequately funded. I mean, we never get enough funding for it, but at least to try to prevent the ballooning deficit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Demapan. Recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just so I can register my comment. Is there a reason why the conference committee chose the forensic audit to be removed? I know we all ran under accountability, transparency and all that. So, is there a reason why? What's the first item that the conference deliberated on and removed that provision? Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Chairman Manglona.

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Thank you for that Floor Leader. I guess the initial intent was to do a study on all the federal funds received from Yutu up until today, including CARES act, including the ARPA and this was to be, you know, the Senate had proposed to give this task to OPA, however Representative Sablan share some of the concerns that OPA had in regards to not having the manpower and in this costing more than a hundred thousand. And so, you know, maybe as we move forward and we try to narrow down the scope of the audit we can better understand how much this would really cost and if we would have funds next fiscal year to appropriate to fully fund this study so that we can gather all the information and all the accurate information as well, because the hundred thousand who was insufficient to fund that study, we felt that it could go back into CHCC. Does that address your concern?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Chairman Donald. I do understand, maybe we can I guess narrow it down in the future, but you know, our Congressman Kilili openly came out and said, the hundreds of millions of dollars that were misspent, I guess and wasn't reimbursed by FEMA. Maybe this is something that we can use in the beginning because a hundred million dollars that we couldn't reimburse is a big issue and that's something that at least we can look at as this body since you know, the past two storms and now with COVID this is something maybe the JGO can continue and look into that FEMA reimbursement part. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Floor Leader. Representative Tina Sablan you had your hand up.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Yes, thank you. Just to add to what Chairman Manglona was explaining regarding the forensic audit. It actually wasn't the first item that we looked to cut. It was a really difficult decision, I think for most of us, myself included to ultimately remove that from this budget act. You know, I think we all still support greater accountability and there is certainly as you note, Floor Leader still a need for more oversight on all these federal funds that are coming into the Commonwealth, not just federal funds as well, because local funds are impacted too. Particularly when we learn about disallowed costs or things like illegal overtime in the Commonwealth ends up being on the hook for that. And so, I will note that you know, there is the possibility and I think we should pursue assistance from our Congressman Kilili in enlisting the support of the inspector generals and reviewing these expenditures. OPA still has a mandate to assist this government and auditing and reviewing the expenditures and receipts of any public funds. You know and just on the issue of costs, one of our challenges is that the scope of the forensic audit as was initially proposed in the budget was so broad it was all funds, federal and local going back five-years and what we came to

understand was just for the single audit of the CNMI government alone for one year. And that's not looking at all funds, but a sample of funds that alone cost the CNMI government upwards of \$300,000. And so, it was very clear to us that the \$100,000 was not going to be sufficient for what was proposed at least initially for a forensic audit. I do agree. I think it's something that we should continue to revisit and we need to narrow it down and identify sufficient funds to support that activity. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan. Vice Speaker, did you want to add anything?

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: No, Speak. Thank you. Just want to thank the conferees Chairman Manglona and the team for coming up with a budget that we can present to the Administration for their consideration. So, with that, I thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Vice Speaker. Representative Patrick San Nicolas?

Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas: It's fine Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright, thank you. Anymore discussion on the floor?

*Several members voiced “ready.”*

*The Clerk called the roll on the motion to adopt Conference Committee Report 22-1 with the following results:*

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	absent ( <i>excused</i> )
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	absent ( <i>excused</i> )
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

Acting House Clerk Venetia S. Rosario: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members voting “yes,” Conference Committee Report 22-1 is hereby adopted. Alright. Members we'll move down to item XVIII, Announcement.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**RESOLUTION CALENDAR**

*No action on the following:*

**H. J. R. NO. 22-11**

To condemn the Government of Japan’s decision to dump nuclear waste into the Pacific Ocean, oppose any other government’s actions related to nuclear testing, storage, and waste disposal in the Pacific, and reaffirm everyone’s fundamental right to a safe and healthy living environment.

**BILL CALENDAR**

*No action on the following:*

**H. B. No. 22-3** A Bill for an Act to amend 9 CMC §2101(d) by requiring the motor vehicle liability insurance expiration to be consistent with the vehicle registration expiration; and for other purposes.

**MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

None

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: I will call for a session next Friday around this time. Any more announcements? None. Okay. We now move down to adjournment and I recognize the Floor Leader.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And what my colleague Rep. Leila said, it's very smooth today and with that, I offer a motion to adjourn, subject to the call of the chair. So move.

*The motion was seconded and carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

*The House adjourned at 2:23 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Venetia S. Rosario  
House Journal Clerk

### APPEARANCE OF LOCAL BILLS

**FIRST LEGISLATIVE DAY:** 1<sup>st</sup> Legislative appearance of a local bill is on the day it is introduced.

**SECOND LEGISLATIVE DAY:** NONE

**THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY:**

H. L. B. NO. 22-19: To amend 10 CMC, Division 3, §3702, Authorization to the Municipalities, to require dog owners to be responsible for their pets solid waste disposals. Introduced by REP. DENITA KAIPAT YANGETMAI of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Richard T. Lizama, and Ralph N. Yumul) on August 3, 2021.

H. L. B. NO. 22-20: To prohibit the hunting of Sambar Deer on Tinian until the year 2026; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*) on August 3, 2021.

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*Appearance of Measures introduced on the House Floor during the House Session on August 31, 2021:*

H. B. NO. 22-76: To rename the “Ma’afala Breadfruit Program” as the “Ivan A. Blanco Breadfruit Program”. Introduced by REP. ROY C. A. ADA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Edwin K. Propst, John Paul P. Sablan, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Ralph N. Yumul) on August 31, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-77: To establish the CNMI Qualified Medical Travel Assistance Program or MTAP; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. CHRISTINA M.E. SABLAN of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for herself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Sheila J. Babauta, Vicente C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on August 31, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Health and Welfare.

H. L. B. NO. 22-21: To appropriate \$1,000,000.00 of the Casino License Fees collected for the Second Senatorial District pursuant to Public Law 20-10; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*) on August 31, 2021.

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*House information on deadlines for override: None*