



TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH  
LEGISLATURE

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL**  
**OPERATIONS**

P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

**MARISSA R. FLORES**  
CHAIRWOMAN

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 23-87  
DATE: October 21, 2024  
RE: House Bill No. 23-108

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Twenty-Third Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations to which was referred:


H. B. NO. 23-108:

“To provide the Public Auditor with the power and duty to establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands”

begs leave to report as follows:

**I. RECOMMENDATION:**

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that H. B. NO. 23-108 be passed by the House in its original form.

HOUSE CLERK'S OFC  
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DATE 10/28/2024 TIME 1:20 PM

## II. ANALYSIS:

### A. Purpose:

The purpose of House Bill No. 23-108 is to provide the Public Auditor with the power and duty to establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

### B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that in order to promote ethical conduct, it is imperative that employees and publicly elected and appointed officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Government receive training on these matters. This training should inform these individuals of ethical principles and theories, ethical decision-making, case studies and scenarios, legal and regulatory compliance, social contracts, and the importance of setting a good example for the public. Furthermore, the training should emphasize the complexity of ethical reasoning, provide a decision-making framework that aligns with constitutional values, and consider the diverse population present in the CNMI.

In addition, it is essential that the training provided to government employees and officials address specific topics, such as conflicts of interest; transparency; accountability; campaign finance law and regulations; the avoidance of corruption and bribery; and values that strengthen public life, like responsiveness, fairness, integrity, and competence. By ensuring that such topics are addressed, government employees and officials will have a better understanding of their legal obligations as well as the consequences should they engage themselves in unethical behavior. Moreover, this legislation will foster a culture of integrity, professionalism, and accountability within the government.

It is the intent of your Committee to amend the current duties of the Public Auditor to include the power and duty to establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Therefore, your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 23-108 and recommends its passage in its original form.

### C. Public Comments:

The Committee received comments from the following:

- Mr. Raymond M. Muna, Chairperson, Civil Service Commission (Written)



The Chairperson of the Civil Service Commission expresses the strong support on behalf of the Commission stating that the Commission believes that the bill represents a significant enhancement to the current legislative framework that shall foster a culture of ethical conduct and accountability within our government.

- Mr. Joseph M. Pangelinan, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management (Written)

The Acting Director expresses that he believes that the bill will provide information and guidance on the code of ethics and intends to develop and implement training on ethics and related matters for all government employees of the CNMI.

- Ms. Dora I. Deleon Guerrero, Temporary Public Auditor, Office of the Public Auditor (Written)

The Temporary Public Auditor expresses her appreciation on behalf of the Office of the Public Auditor to for the opportunity to comment on the bill and goes on by informing the Committee that the Office of the Public Auditor already has a robust ethics training program carried out within their authority under the Ethics Code Act of 1992 and have been conducting their training program for nearly 20 years and thus the bill seems unnecessary.

#### D. Legislative History:

House Bill No. 23-108 was introduced by Representative Diego Vincent F. Camacho, and coauthored by 11 other Representatives on May 10, 2024, and was referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations for disposition.

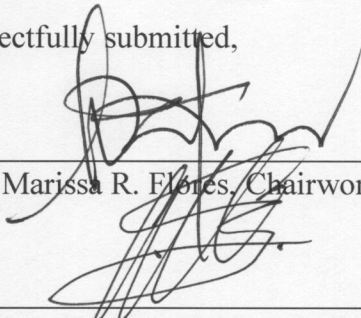
#### E. Cost Benefit:

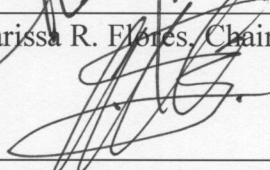
The enactment of House Bill No. 23-108, will not result in additional cost to the CNMI Government for the intent of the proposed legislation is to provide the Public Auditor with the power and duty to establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

**III. CONCLUSION:**

The Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H. B. NO. 23-108 and recommends its passage in its original form.


Respectfully submitted,

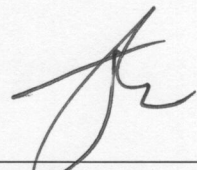
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Chairwoman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Vincent R.S. Aldan, Member

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Rep. Vicente C. Camacho, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Malcolm J. Omar, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Ralph N. Yumul


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Joel C. Camacho, Vice Chair

  
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Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao, Member

  
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Rep. Manny G.T. Castro, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Member

Reviewed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
House Legal Counsel

Attachments:

- Letter dated June 18, 2024 from the Chairperson of the Civil Service Commission.
- Letter dated June 18, 2024 from the Acting Director of the Office of Personnel Management
- Letter dated June 13, 2024 from the Temporary Public Auditor of the Office of the Public Auditor





COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

**OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

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RAYMOND M. MUÑA  
Chairperson, CSC

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JOSEPH M. PANGELINAN  
Acting DirectorPersonnel

June 18, 2024

OUT-2024-027

Marissa R. Flores

Chairwoman

House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations

23rd Commonwealth Legislature

Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Bldg

P.O. Box 500586

Saipan, MP 96950

**Re: Public Comment in Support of HB 23-108**

As the Chairperson of the Civil Service Commission (Commission), I am writing on behalf of the Commission to express our strong support for HB 23-108, which aims to establish a comprehensive ethics training program for all government employees and public officials in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). This bill represents a significant enhancement to our current legislative framework, fostering a culture of ethical conduct and accountability within our government.

The CNMI Ethics Act and the Commonwealth Auditing Act of 1983 provide important guidelines and auditing powers to uphold ethical standards and financial integrity within government operations. However, these existing laws do not mandate a structured and comprehensive ethics training program for all government personnel. HB 23-108 addresses this crucial gap by empowering the Public Auditor to develop and implement an ethics training program. This program will encompass ethical principles, decision-making frameworks, conflicts of interest, transparency, accountability, and other essential topics.

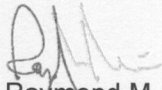
The implementation of this training program will ensure that all government employees and officials are well-informed about ethical standards and are better equipped to make ethical decisions in their roles. By providing consistent and comprehensive training, we can promote a deeper understanding of ethical behavior and compliance, thereby enhancing public trust in our government institutions.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that all government agencies are required by law to contribute 1% of their annual budget to support the Office of the Public Auditor (OPA) role in auditing and ensuring the integrity of public funds and operations across all government agencies as mandated by 1 CMC § 7831(a). It is both reasonable and appropriate that the OPA provides these essential training programs at no additional cost to the agencies. This ensures that the funds are effectively utilized to directly benefit the agencies and the public by promoting ethical governance and preventing misconduct.

In conclusion, HB 23-108 is a well-considered and necessary legislative enhancement. It will ensure that all government employees and officials receive the vital training needed to uphold the highest ethical standards and serve the public with integrity. The Commission fully supports this bill and urges the Legislature to pass it, taking a significant step towards a more ethical and accountable government.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Raymond M. Muña  
Chairperson, Civil Service Commission





RAYMOND M. MUNA  
Chairman, CSC

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

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JOSEPH M. PANGELINAN  
Acting Director of Personnel

June 18, 2024

Honorable Marissa R. Flores  
Representative  
CNM House of Representative  
Jesus P. Mafnas Building  
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Chairwoman Flores:

Re: Comments to House Bill 23-108

Thank you for your letter dated June 04, 2024, requesting for comments on House Bill 23-108, a bill "to provide the Public Auditor the power and duty to establish, develop and implement a training on ethics and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

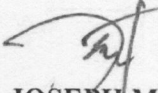
PART 400, Subpart D of Section 10-20.2-436 of the Personnel Service System Rules & Regulations (PSSR&R) specifies a provision on Code of Ethics for Government Personnel Service. The Office of Personnel Management is entrusted to implement and enforce such a provision by providing information and guidance on code of ethics to the personnel service employees. However, when it comes to conducting "Code of Ethics" training, our responsibility does not extend to employees in government autonomous agencies, the judicial and the legislative branch. We believe that such responsibility rests with the Office of the Public Auditor (OPA). As proposed, H.B. 23-108 intends to do just that, to develop and implement training on ethics and related matters for all government employees of the CNMI. .

Over the years, through OPM's orientation sessions, we have requested OPA to conduct numerous trainings on "Code of Ethics" to our CNMI government civil and excepted service employees. They have done an excellent job providing the information and educating our government employees on topics pertaining to conflict of interest, accountability, public corruption and bribery. The information they present are relevant and very effective because they use actual reported ethics violation cases in the CNMI as examples. Employees can easily relate to the subject matter, learn the consequences presented and the negative impact it has for violating the ethic codes, rules, regulations and laws. The enactment of such a law would legally give OPA the power and duty to develop, implement and train employees but also be proactive in preventing ethics violations in the CNMI government.

We commend Representative Camacho for introducing H.B. 23-108, and we do support enactment of the bill into law.

Again, thank you for the opportunity.

Respectfully,



**JOSEPH M. PANGELINAN**  
Acting Director of Personnel

xc: Civil Service Commission  
OPM Chiefs





# Office of the Public Auditor

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

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June 13, 2024

OPA-2024-29

**VIA EMAIL** ([rep.floresm@cnmileg.net](mailto:rep.floresm@cnmileg.net); [staff.floresm@gmail.com](mailto:staff.floresm@gmail.com))

Chairwoman Marissa Flores  
The House of Representatives Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations  
23rd Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building  
P.O. Box 500586  
Saipan, MP 96950

**RE: OPA comments on House Bill No. 23-108**

Dear Chairwoman Flores:

The Office of the Public Auditor (“OPA”) is grateful for the opportunity to comment on House Bill Number 23-108 (“H.B. 23-108” or the “bill”). OPA appreciates the legislative attention to the issue of ethics in government and the provision of applicable training to advance the same. Our office does, however, offer the following comments concerning the bill.

OPA already has a robust ethics training program carried out within its existing authority under the Ethics Code Act of 1992<sup>1</sup> (“Ethics Code”) and thus H.B. 23-108, while well-intentioned, seems unnecessary. OPA’s training program has been in place, in various forms, for nearly 20 years. As reported in our 2023 Citizen Centric Report, OPA provided training to 19 government departments/agencies, presenting to a combined total of 469 government employees. Within the past eight months, OPA provided training to five government agencies consisting of 238 participants. OPA expects this number to increase before the end of the year as agencies continue to submit training requests.

Section 8561 (f) of the Ethics Code provides the Public Auditor authority to: “conduct research in the field of governmental ethics and to carry out such educational programs he or she deems necessary to effectuate the policy and purpose of this chapter.” While the text of H.B. 23-108 supplements existing law to specify a training program, such authority currently fits within the existing umbrella of “educational programs.”

OPA welcomes any opportunity to partner with your Committee to pursue other legislative measures to enhance government ethics. If you have any questions about OPA’s comments, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Dora I. Deleon Guerrero, CPA  
Temporary Public Auditor

cc: Joseph Przyuski, OPA Legal Counsel

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<sup>1</sup> Codified at 1 CMC §§ 8501, et seq.

REFERRED TO: J6W  
(HOUSE)  
5/13/2024

TWENTY-THIRD NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH  
LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

may 10, 2024

Sec. Spe Session, 2024

H. B. 23- 108

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To provide the Public Auditor with the power and duty to establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE 23<sup>RD</sup> NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

1           **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that in order to  
2 promote ethical conduct, it is imperative that employees and publicly elected and  
3 appointed officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)  
4 Government receive training on these matters. This training should inform these  
5 individuals of ethical principles and theories, ethical decision-making, case studies  
6 and scenarios, legal and regulatory compliance, social contracts, and the  
7 importance of setting a good example for the public. Furthermore, the training  
8 should emphasize the complexity of ethical reasoning, provide a decision-making  
9 framework that aligns with constitutional values, and consider the diverse  
10 population present in the CNMI. By providing a comprehensive ethics module,  
11 government employees and officials will be equipped with the necessary tools to  
12 recognize ethical dilemmas, analyze those dilemmas, and make informed ethical



1 decisions in the best interest of the public. Additionally, the training should address  
2 specific topics, such as conflicts of interest; transparency; accountability; campaign  
3 finance law and regulations; the avoidance of corruption and bribery; and values  
4 that strengthen public life, like responsiveness, fairness, integrity, and competence.

5         The Legislature further finds this training will assist CNMI Government  
6 employees in making informed decisions during the employee selection process by  
7 making clear the behaviors that would disqualify an applicant from being hired.  
8 Moreover, by providing training on government ethics and related matters,  
9 employees will better understand their own legal obligations and the consequences  
10 of unethical behavior. Based on the foregoing, it is clear that this legislation will  
11 foster a culture of integrity, professionalism, and accountability within the  
12 government.

13         Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to provide the Public Auditor with the  
14 power and duty to establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics  
15 and related matters for all government employees and public officials of the  
16 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

17         **Section 2. Amendment.** 1 CMC § 2303 is hereby amended to add a new  
18 subsection (e) that shall read as follows:

19         “**§ 2303. Public Auditor: Duties.**

20         (a) through (d) shall remain unchanged.

21         (e) The Public Auditor shall establish, develop, and implement a training

1 program on ethics and related matters for all employees and public officials,  
2 including elected and appointed public officials, of the Government of the  
3 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.”

4 **Section 3. Amendment.** 1 CMC § 8561 is hereby amended to add a new  
5 subsection (k) that shall read as follows:

6 **“§ 8561. Powers and Duties.**

7 In addition to other powers and duties specifically mentioned in this chapter,  
8 the Public Auditor shall have the following powers and duties:

9 (a) through (j) shall remain unchanged.

10 (k) To establish, develop, and implement a training program on ethics and  
11 related matters for all employees and public officials, including elected and  
12 appointed officials, of the Government of the Commonwealth of the  
13 Northern Mariana Islands.”

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

19 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein  
20 shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or  
21 acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted



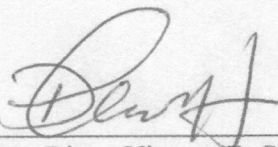
1 under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding  
2 instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have  
3 the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal,  
4 which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

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

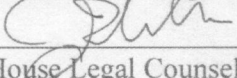
Intro  
Prefiled: 5/10/2024

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

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

  
Rep. Diego Vincent F. Camacho

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

 5/9/24  
House Legal Counsel

