



TWENTY-THIRD NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND TOURISM**  
P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

**JULIE MARIE A. OGO**  
CHAIRWOMAN

*Adopted - 11/22/2024*  
STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 23-91  
DATE: October 17, 2024  
RE: House Bill No. 23-117

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 Commerce and Tourism to which was referred:

**House Bill No. 23-117:** "To mandate the implementation of a digital program to streamline business licensing and permits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

begs leave to report as follows:

**I. RECOMMENDATION:**

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that House Bill No. 23-117 be passed by the House in its current form.

HOUSE CLERK'S OFFICE  
RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*  
DATE *11/18/2024* TIME *3:23 PM*

## II. ANALYSIS:

### A. Purpose:

The purpose of this Act is to mandate the implementation of a digital program to streamline business licensing and permits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

### B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that there are persistent challenges associated with the existing process for obtaining CNMI business licenses and permits, which has impeded economic growth and development within the CNMI. The existing system is characterized as “cumbersome, time-consuming, and inefficient” and creates significant barriers for both entrepreneurs and established enterprises.

Your Committee finds that there is a need for a comprehensive digital solution to overcome the current obstacles faced by businesses. The intent of this Act is to address these issues by requiring the implementation of a digital program that will streamline the entire business licensing and permitting process in the CNMI. This initiative is expected to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for all businesses operating within the CNMI and aims to fundamentally transform the business licensing and permitting process. Your Committee further finds that these digital programs, which includes electronic licensing management systems, not only mitigate bureaucratic inefficiencies but also promote user convenience by allowing businesses to complete necessary documentation remotely.

Thus, the primary objective of this Act is to mandate the implementation of a digital program that enhances the business licensing and permitting process in the CNMI. Your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 23-117 and recommends its passage in its current form.

### C. Public Comments:

The Committee received written comments from the following:

- Mr. Ray N. Yumul, Secretary of Public Works, CNMI Department of Public Works. Comments dated September 18, 2024.

Mr. Yumul supports H.B. No. 23-117. He believes a digital system could greatly enhance processing applications by reducing delays common in processing applications manually. He also emphasizes the importance of aligning digital processes with DPW Building Safety Code Division standards and highlights the existence of the current One Start Permit system.



“As the agency responsible for issuing permits, the Department of Public Works supports the initiative to enhance online accessibility for businesses, facilitating easier application for and renewal of business licenses and other permits.”

- Ms. Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary, CNMI Department of Commerce. Comments dated September 30, 2024.

Ms. Mafnas supports House Bill 23-117, recognizing that “it will greatly enhance the accessibility of services of businesses in our community.” Ms. Mafnas also highlights the need to secure funding, provide employee support and training for a smooth transition, and ensure that underserved communities can participate.

- Ms. Marian DLG. Tudela, Chairwoman, 17<sup>th</sup> Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council. Comments dated September 30, 2024.

Ms. Tudela advises that, before implementing HB 23-117’s proposed digital program for business licensing, it is essential to assess and enhance the Department of Finance’s MUNIS system to avoid redundancy. She emphasizes that true progress requires improved interagency digital integration, sufficient resources, and proper training for staff, as digitization alone will not resolve the backlogs currently caused by limited staffing and outdated systems. In her view, strengthening current structures with adequate support would streamline business licensing and permitting more effectively than introducing new legislation.

“In other words, more work should be done on HB 23-117, and not usher a new legislative ‘mandate (for) the implementation of a digital program...(on)...business licensing and permits’ without first performing basic due diligence in good faith on the current status of business licensing at Revenue and Tax, in relation to Treasury at Finance, or the Registrar of Corporation at Commerce, no less the local Zoning on Saipan.”

- Mr. Joe C. Guerrero, President, Saipan Chamber of Commerce. Comments dated October 14, 2024.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce expresses support for H.B. No. 23-117’s intent to streamline business processes in the CNMI, but it also raises concerns that it states should be addressed to ensure the bill’s success and sustainability. Specifically, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce emphasizes the need for a clear funding plan, advocates for prioritizing local CNMI vendors in the development and execution of the program, and recommends additional language “that accounts for extenuating circumstances for complex projects.” The Chamber believes these adjustments will help the bill achieve its goals without placing undue burdens on the business community or government resources.

“In conclusion, while we support the goal of streamlining business processes in the CNMI, we encourage the Legislature to address these concerns—specifically the need for clear funding sources and prioritizing local vendors.”

D. Legislative History:

House Bill No. 23-117 was introduced by Representative Thomas John DLC. Manglona on August 30, 2024, and was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Commerce and Tourism for disposition.

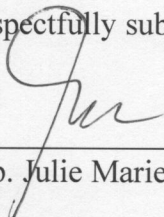
E. Cost Benefit:

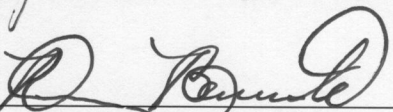
The cost-benefit analysis of HB 23-117 remains uncertain. While initial costs are expected for implementing and maintaining the digital program, the digital program is anticipated to deliver long-term savings and benefits, such as increased efficiency, reduced processing times, and lower operational expenses in the business licensing and permitting process. These ongoing savings and benefits may eventually outweigh the upfront investment. A comprehensive assessment of the specific costs versus long-term savings should be completed in order to clarify the financial impact of HB 23-117.

**III. CONCLUSION:**

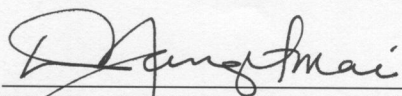
The Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 23-117 and recommends its passage in its current form.

Respectfully submitted,

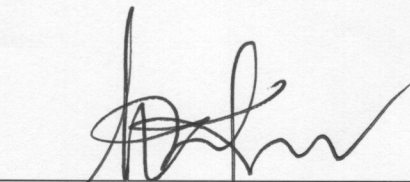
  
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Rep. Julie Marie A. Ogo, Chairwoman

  
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Rep. Roman C. Benavente, Member

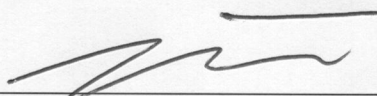
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Vicente C. Camacho, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, Member


Reviewed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Vice Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Diego Vincent F. Camacho, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Manny Gregory T. Castro, Member



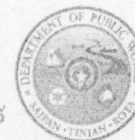
  
House Legal Counsel

Attachment:

- Letter dated September 18, 2024, from the Secretary of the CNMI Department of Public Works.
- Letter dated September 30, 2024, from the Secretary of the CNMI Department of Commerce.
- Letter dated September 30, 2024, from the Chairwoman of the 17<sup>th</sup> Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council.
- Letter dated October 14, 2024, from the President of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
Building Safety Code Division, Department of Public Works  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor - Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan, MP 96950



September 18, 2024  
Serial No. PW24-0728

The Honorable Representative Julie A. Ogo  
Chairwoman  
Standing Committee on Commerce & Tourism  
23<sup>rd</sup> Northern Mariana Commonwealth Legislature  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
P.O. Box 500586  
Saipan, MP 96950

Subject: Comments on House Bill No. 23-117

Dear Honorable Chairwoman:

Thank you for requesting the Department of Public Works to provide comments on H.B. No. 23-117, titled "To Mandate the Implementation of a Digital Program to Streamline Business Licenses and Permits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

As the agency responsible for issuing permits, the Department of Public Works supports the initiative to enhance online accessibility for businesses, facilitating easier application for and renewal of business licenses and other permits. Implementing a digital program for business licensing and permitting has the potential to significantly improve the efficiency of processing applications. Traditional methods, which often involve manual paperwork, can result in delays due to lost documents, miscommunication, or slow processing times. A digital system can automate many of these processes, enabling faster submission, review, and approval of applications. For example, online forms can guide applicants through the necessary steps, reducing errors and ensuring that all required information is submitted correctly.

With respect to permits under our Building Safety Code Division in relation to business licenses, it is important to understand that Building Safety Codes are established by law to ensure that structures are safe for occupancy and use. These codes address various aspects, including structural integrity, fire safety, electrical systems, plumbing, and accessibility standards. Compliance with these codes is verified through inspections conducted by our building inspectors.

Obtaining or renewing a business license must align with passing a safety inspection and receiving a Certificate of Compliance from the Building Safety Code Division. This certificate ensures that the building meets all safety standards and is suitable for occupancy. Inspections are typically conducted annually for existing businesses renewing their licenses. However, if there are changes in occupancy or an increase in floor area an

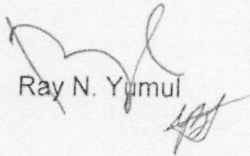


inspection is required as this factors can impact occupant load and code requirements under Chapter 3 of the 2018 International Building Code for each business classification.

Lastly, it is important to note that there is already a streamlined application process (One Start Permit) involving Zoning, BECQ, CRM, Fish & Wildlife, and the Historic Preservation Office. These permitting agencies must adhere to federal guidelines and obtain approval before issuing permits potentially contributing to delays, particularly in the Construction Business Industry.

Thank you for considering our input. If you have any further questions or require additional assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

  
Ray N. Yumul



*Department of Commerce*  
*Office of the Secretary*  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
P.O. Box 5795 CHRB, Saipan, MP 96950  
Tel: (670) 664-3077 • Fax: (670) 664-3067  
Email: [info@commerce.gov.mp](mailto:info@commerce.gov.mp)  
Web: [www.commerce.gov.mp](http://www.commerce.gov.mp)



Arnold I. Palacios Governor • David M. Apatang, Lt. Governor • Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary

September 30, 2024

The Honorable Representative Julie A. Ogo  
Chairwoman, House Standing Committee on Commerce and Tourism  
House Representative  
23rd Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
Honorable Jesus M. Mafnas Building, Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Re: Comments on Senate Bill No. 23-117

Dear Representative Ogo:

Thank you for giving the Department of Commerce the opportunity to submit comments on House Bill 23-117: *"To mandate the implementation of a digital program to streamline business licensing and permits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."*

COMMENTS: I am in support of this bill as it will greatly enhance the accessibility of services of businesses in our community.

However, we need to take into account and consider the following:

- The bill resonates the whole intention of the EnerGov project, which so many Gov't agencies are still untangling their wits on this huge undertaking;
- The bill must realize the need for the funding to accomplish its intention for the implementation and the provision of support and training for both staff and users to ensure a smooth transition;
- I recommend that we revisit the option to retrovert the Department of Finance / Business License Section to the Department of Commerce;
- To ensure the program does not disadvantage and underserved communities and provide necessary resources to aid their participation;

If there should be any further information needed or should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office at 670-664-3077.

Respectfully yours,

REMEDI0 C. MAFNAS  
Secretary





## 17<sup>th</sup> SAIPAN AND NORTHERN ISLANDS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

P.O. Box 500309 ck, Saipan, MP. 96950-0309  
Telephone # (670) 664-2700/2701 • email: [spnmunicipalcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:spnmunicipalcouncil@gmail.com)

*Marian Deleon Guerrero Tudela*  
Chairwoman

*Antonia Manibusan Tudela*  
Vice Chairwoman

*Carmen Cabrera Pangelinan*  
Secretary

September 30, 2024

SNIMC2024-176

Rep. Julie Ogo  
Chairwoman  
23<sup>rd</sup> House Committee on Commerce & Tourism  
CNMI Legislature  
Capital, Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

RECEIVED  
Oct 1 2024 1:55 PM  
Pedro Tavares

Re. NMI Price Council in re to **House Bill 23-117**

Dear Chairwoman Ogo:

More than 20 years ago on November 30, 2001, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands adopted Public Law 12-76 "(to) create the Business License Application Task Force to formulate a plan for a One-Stop Business License Center".

The CNMI Revenue and Tax, (as did the Department of Finance, the Governor's Office, and numerous executive departments and autonomous agencies), has since installed agency centric website that enabled online digitized tax forms and other forms related to business licensing that are digitally accessible electronically 24/7.

With the exception of the CNMI Scholarship, SHEFA, the Northern Marianas College, schools in the Public School System (PSS), and other autonomous agencies in the CNMI government, the CNMI has yet to install an *interactive* online platform that is 24/7, save the Department of Finance's MUNIS financial management system if and when fully implemented would enable online interactive platform on a much larger scale that should also be business-friendly in tracking payment processing of government procurement transactions with private vendors, no less government users.

However, the full panoply of MUNIS' interactive digitized functions has not yet been fully realized and appears headed to being downgraded or access limited to mere query and certain interactive digitized features for internal and undisclosed reasons.

It is urged the subject matter be closely looked into by the legislature in order to better understand the rationale behind what appears as utility restricted or downgrade on the use of MUNIS' powerful interactive digitized functions, that when fully functional, could potentially be an example of an interactive digitized platform 24/7, and one that also aligns with the intent behind HB 23-117, which is to enable and facilitate a business friendly online platform, not just for licensing but also for transactions and processing of vendor payments with the government.

That is, it important to find out whether there were prior studies conducted prior to the changeover from JD Edwards financial management system at Finance to MUNIS, looking into matters such as training required to fully equip staff on the financial management changeover, no less the required software that would allow data migration or data crosswalks from JD to MUNIS, especially given what may be potentially be a \$10 million investment in the new MUNIS financial management system that assures access for greater transparency and accountability and productivity.

As it stands, HB 23-117 seems to anchor reliance on a digitized platform operating out of Indonesia as "numerous studies" without making available links to enable the reader to look further into such "studies" (if any) regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of Indonesia's online single submission approach.

In other words, more work should be done on HB 23-117, and not usher a new legislative "mandate (for) the implementation of a digital program... (on)... business licensing and permits" without first performing basic due diligence in good faith on the current status of business licensing at Revenue and Tax, in relation to Treasury at Finance, or the Registrar of Corporation at Commerce, no less the local Zoning on Saipan. For these agencies are inter-related and do play a major role in processing business license in the CNMI, in conjunction with the business license center at Rev-n-Tax which ultimately issues the actual business license and clearances.

In reality, what is needed is an interactive and integrated online module that allows cognizant inter-agencies to share data links and allow interagency communicate with one another more via on-demand online platform with increasingly less reliance on telephone landlines (except on emergencies), as telephone lines may be busy, muted, or simply unanswered, if not automatically voice mail default for message-only interaction.

Per se digitization that is online accessible 24/7 would still require capable staff to pre-screen, process, review, and evaluate applications before the actual license, or permit is issued by the business license center. Digitization is not a panacea to a process or function that still requires human resource intervention and management. For much of the backlog in processing may be a factor of shortage of staff, outdated computer system or lack of software, no lack of ongoing training and retention of staff with experience or institutional knowledge.

Ultimately, § 3 in Public Law 12-76 in re to the One-Stop Business License Application Center ("the center") at Revenue and Tax remains relevant and subject to an ongoing improvement process. But, for the improvement to carry and take place, it requires resource support to enable the center to perform the authority and responsibilities outlined in the law and make detailed recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on the steps to further expedite the application process as it currently serves the business community at present.

Permitting involves a process, procedure and applicable law that are distinctly different from business licensing. The most glaring difference is the scope of interfacing required that involves both local and applicable federal agencies, particularly on NEPA and Section 106 compliance, two largest hurdles facing construction activities in the NMI. For instance, Section 106 involves not only the local historic preservation office on Saipan, but also cognizant federal agencies with FEMA, OIA, etc., depending on the scope of work on a given undertaking, be it government-supervised project, private residential activities or commercial constructions.

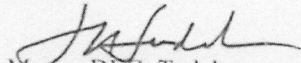
Like business licensing, mandating digitization that is online accessible 24/7 would still require capable staff to pre-screen, process, review, and evaluate applications before the actual permit clearance is issued for instance by Saipan Zoning, DPW Building Code, Historic Preservation Office, Fish and Wildlife, and the One-Start Center at BECQ. Per se digitization is not a panacea to a process or function that still requires human resource intervention and management. For much of the backlog in processing may be a factor of shortage of staff, outdated computer system or lack of software, no lack of ongoing training and retention of staff with experience or institutional knowledge.



That is, instead of adding a new layer of bureaucracy at Commerce over the center at Revenue and Tax, for instance, it is important to conduct a needs assessment on the present system as it has operated to date and work in supporting the process that is already working and works, a process that simply requires resource support by the Legislature, in order to enable both the business license application center to work better as well as provide the required support for the permitting interfacing to perform the authority and responsibilities outlined in regulations and law and make detailed recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on the steps to further expedite the license and permit application process as they are currently intended to work and are working in servicing clients in the local business community, the mayors in the municipalities, and the central government itself.

For consideration too is to allow Tinian and Rota to access the interactive digitized platform and certain functions 24/7.

All the Best,



Marian DLG. Tudela  
Chairwoman

- xc. Governor Arnold I. Palacios
- Speaker Edmund Villagomez
- Senate President Edith DL Guerrero
- Saipan Chamber of Commerce
- Saipan Hotel Association
- Chairman, Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors
- Exec. Director, Commonwealth Ports Authority
- Exec. Director, Commonwealth Economic Development Authority
- Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan
- Rota Mayor Aubrey Hocog
- Chairman, JP Sablan, SNILD



**Board of Directors**

October 14, 2024

President

Joe C. Guerrero

Thomas Manglona, Representative  
23<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Legislature  
PO Box 500586  
Saipan MP 96950

Vice President

Joshua Wise

Treasurer

Janice Tenorio

**Re: H.B. No. 23-117 - To mandate the implementation of a digital program to streamline business licensing and permits in the CNMI**

Secretary

Ron Smith

Hâfa Adai yan Tirow Representative Manglona,

Directors

Alex A. Sablan  
John Arroyo  
Velma Palacios  
Brad Ruzsala  
Kevin McCale

On behalf of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, I am writing in regards to House Bill No. 23-117, while we support the efforts to streamline processes of the current system, we have concerns that we believe should be addressed to ensure the success and sustainability of this legislation:

- Clarification of funding, the bill mentions general funds and federal grants, but no clear plan has been outlined for securing and sustaining financial support, which is critical for both development and ongoing maintenance.
- Prioritization of CNMI-based vendors, we strongly recommend that the development and execution of the program prioritizes CNMI local vendors, this will support local businesses and ensure that the program is tailored to our specific needs in the CNMI.
- Alternatives for extenuating circumstances, as with similar legislation, H.B. 23-81 to which we provided comments on, we urge the inclusion of language that accounts for extenuating circumstances for complex projects or federal regulations, which may require more time than the proposed timelines.

**Executive Director**

Kimberly Camacho

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In conclusion, while we support the goal of streamlining business processes in the CNMI, we encourage the Legislature to address these concerns—specifically the need for clear funding sources and prioritizing local vendors. With these revisions, we believe House Bill 23-117 will be better positioned to deliver its intended benefits without imposing unintended burdens on our business community or government resources.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our initial thoughts and concerns with you and we look forward to working with your committee on this and other proposed legislation to improve our government and community.

Si Yu'us Ma'âse yan Ghilisow,

Joe C. Guerrero  
President  
Saipan Chamber of Commerce



**TWENTY-THIRD NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH**

**LEGISLATURE**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**AUGUST 30, 2024**

**Fourth Regular Session, 2024**

**H. B. 23-117**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To mandate the implementation of a digital program to streamline business licensing and permits in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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

1           **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be known as the “Digital Business  
2 Licensing and Permits Streamlining Act.”

3           **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that the  
4 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has long grappled with a  
5 cumbersome and inefficient process for obtaining business licenses and permits,  
6 which has hindered economic growth and development in the region. However, the  
7 introduction of the "Digital Business Licensing and Permits Streamlining Act"  
8 promises to revolutionize this critical aspect of the business landscape, ushering in  
9 a new era of modernization, efficiency, and accessibility.

10           The Legislature believes that the findings of this Act underscore the urgent  
11 need for a comprehensive digital solution to the current challenges faced by  
12 businesses. The current system is often described as "cumbersome, time-

1 consuming, and inefficient," presenting significant obstacles to entrepreneurs and  
2 established companies alike. The purpose of this legislation is to address these  
3 shortcomings by mandating the implementation of a digital program that will  
4 streamline the entire business licensing and permitting process, ultimately  
5 improving efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for all businesses operating in  
6 the CNMI.

7         The Legislature further finds that cognizant to numerous studies conducted,  
8 have highlighted the benefits of implementing electronic licensing management  
9 systems, such as the case of the Online Single Submission system in Indonesia.  
10 These digital platforms not only reduce bureaucratic red tape but also enhance user  
11 convenience by allowing businesses to complete the necessary paperwork  
12 remotely, without the need for in-person visits to government offices.

13         Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to mandate the implementation of a  
14 digital program to streamline business licensing and permits in the Commonwealth  
15 of the Northern Mariana Islands.

16         **Section 3. Amendment.** Subject to codification by the Law Revision  
17 Commission, Title 1 Government, Division 2 Executive Branch, Part 1  
18 Organization of the Executive Branch, Chapter 9 Department of Commerce of the  
19 Commonwealth Code is amended by adding Article 5, which shall read as follows:



1           **“Article 5. Digital Business Licensing and Permits Streamlining Act.**

2                           **§ 101. Definitions.**

3                           (a) "Digital program" refers to an online platform or system  
4                           designed to facilitate the application, processing, and issuance of business  
5                           licenses and permits.

6                           (b) "Business license" refers to the official authorization issued by  
7                           the CNMI Government that allows an individual or entity to operate a  
8                           business within the Commonwealth.

9                           (c) "Permit" refers to the official authorization required for specific  
10                           business activities, constructions, operations, or uses, issued by the  
11                           appropriate regulatory agencies within the CNMI Government.”

12                           **§ 102. Mandate for Digital Program Implementation.**

13                           The CNMI Government shall implement a comprehensive digital  
14                           program to streamline the process for obtaining business licenses and  
15                           permits. This digital program shall be developed and managed by the  
16                           Department of Commerce in collaboration with the Department of Finance,  
17                           the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and other relevant  
18                           regulatory agencies.

19                           **§ 103. Features of the Digital Program.**

20                           The digital program shall include, but not be limited to, the  
21                           following features:

1 (a) An online portal where businesses can submit applications for  
2 licenses and permits.

3 (b) A system for tracking the status of applications in real-time.

4 (c) Electronic payment options for fees associated with licenses and  
5 permits.

6 (d) A centralized database accessible to all relevant regulatory  
7 agencies to ensure efficient processing and coordination.

8 (e) Automated notifications to applicants regarding the status of  
9 their applications, required documentation, and deadlines.

10 (f) A customer support system to assist applicants with navigating  
11 the digital program and resolving any issues.

12 **§ 104. Implementation Timeline.**

13 The Department of Commerce, in collaboration with relevant  
14 regulatory agencies, shall develop and launch the digital program within 18  
15 months from the effective date of this Act. A progress report shall be  
16 submitted to the Legislature every six months until the digital program is  
17 fully implemented.

18 **§ 105. Training and Outreach.**

19 The Department of Commerce shall conduct training sessions and  
20 provide resources to educate business owners and relevant stakeholders on  
21 how to use the digital program. Outreach efforts shall be made to ensure all



1 business owners, especially those in remote areas, are aware of the digital  
2 program and its benefits.

3 **§ 106. Help Center Establishment.**

4 (a) The Department of Commerce shall establish a Help Center  
5 equipped with computers and staffed by employees trained to assist  
6 individuals who may not be technologically savvy.

7 (b) The Help Center shall provide the following services:

8 (1) Assistance with navigating the digital program.

9 (2) Guidance on completing and submitting online  
10 applications.

11 (3) Technical support for issues related to the digital  
12 program.

13 (4) Education resources and training sessions on using the  
14 digital program.

15 (c) The Help Center shall be accessible to all business owners and  
16 applicants, with operating hours that accommodate various schedules.

17 **§ 107. Funding.**

18 The funding for the development and implementation of the digital  
19 program, including the establishment for the Help Center, shall be allocated  
20 from the general fund and may also include federal grants, private sector  
21 partnerships, and other sources of funding deemed appropriate.

1                   **§ 108. Monitoring and Evaluation.**

2                   The Department of Commerce shall continuously monitor the  
3                   effectiveness of the digital program and make improvements as necessary.

4                   An annual report on the performance of the digital program, including user  
5                   feedback and metrics on processing times and efficiency, shall be submitted  
6                   to the Legislature.”

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

12                  **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein  
13                  shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or  
14                  acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted  
15                  under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding  
16                  instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have  
17                  the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal,  
18                  which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

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



HOUSE BILL 23-117

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Prefiled: 8/27/2024

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

Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Thomas J. DLC. Manglona

/s/ Rep. Roy C.A. Ada

/s/ Rep. Angelo A. Camacho

/s/ Rep. Julie M.A. Ogo

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ Joseph L.G. Taijeron, Jr.

House Legal Counsel