



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

JOEL C. CAMACHO
CHAIRPERSON

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-53

DATE: April 2, 2026

RE: HOUSE BILL No. 24-28

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

Dear Mr. Speaker:

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

House Bill No. 24-28: To establish a grand jury system in the Commonwealth for use in criminal investigations and prosecutions, and to provide for related powers and procedures.

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that the House file House Bill No. 24-28.

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

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DATE 4/10/2026 TIME 11:38AM

The purpose of House Bill No. 24-28 is to establish a grand jury system within the Commonwealth to support criminal investigations and prosecutions, and to prescribe the related powers, duties, procedures, and safeguards necessary for its effective and constitutional operation.

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that the Commonwealth currently lacks a statutory mechanism to compel testimony and documentary evidence during criminal investigations, which impedes the Office of the Attorney General's ability to investigate serious, complex, and public-corruption matters. Without pre-charge subpoena authority, investigations may stall or depend on voluntary cooperation, undermining effective law enforcement, public accountability, and the timely pursuit of complex criminal activity.

Your Committee finds that this Act responsibly establishes an optional grand jury process impaneled by the Superior Court at the Attorney General's request as an investigative and charging mechanism with clear composition, term limits, and secrecy protections. The grand jury is empowered to issue subpoenas, compel testimony and production of evidence, return indictments ("True Bills") by the required vote, and report "No True Bills" where probable cause is lacking, while preserving prosecutorial discretion to proceed by complaint or information.

Your Committee finds that the Act balances investigative efficacy with individual rights and procedural safeguards by preserving privileges (including the Fifth Amendment), providing judicial processes for immunity, motions to quash or modify subpoenas, challenges to grand jury composition, contempt and enforcement remedies, and court oversight of secrecy and disclosure. The Act also authorizes the courts to adopt implementing rules and expressly retains existing charging procedures, ensuring the grand jury is an additional, not exclusive, tool for prosecution.

E. Public Comments/Public Hearing:

Your Committee solicited written and oral testimony; however, no submissions were received either prior to or on the day of the Committee meeting held April 2, 2026.

E. Legislative History:

On May 15, 2025, Representative Marissa R. Flores introduced House Bill No. 24-28, which was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations for disposition.

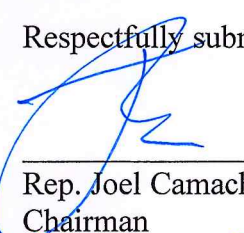
F. Cost Benefit Analysis:

The enactment of House Bill No. 24-28 will result in minimal net cost to the CNMI government because implementation chiefly requires modest administrative and recurring expenses for court staffing, juror fees, and Attorney General support to empanel and manage grand juries, while significant costs can be contained by using existing Superior Court and OAG resources; these limited expenses are offset by benefits including more effective and timely investigations of complex crimes, improved prosecution outcomes, greater recovery of public assets, and deterrence of corruption and organized crime, all of which reduce long-term enforcement and fiscal burdens.

III. CONCLUSION:

Based on thorough deliberation, your Committee concludes that House Bill No. 24-28 should be filed by the House.

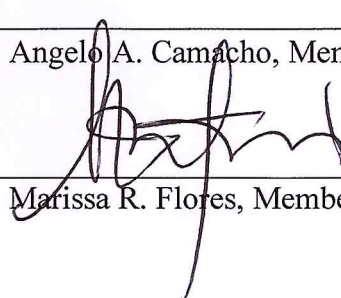
Respectfully submitted,



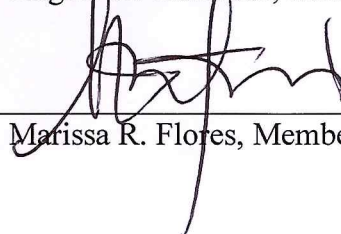
Rep. Joel Camacho, Chairman
Chairman



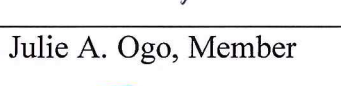
Rep. Vincent S. Aldan, Member



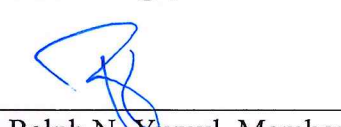
Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member



Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Member



Rep. Julie A. Ogo, Member



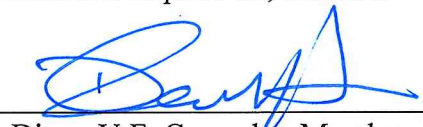
Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, Member



Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao
Vice Chairman



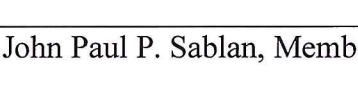
Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Member



Rep. Diego V.F. Camacho, Member

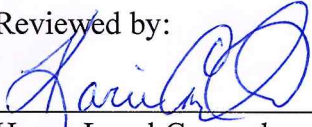


Rep. Joseph A. Flores, Member



Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Member

Reviewed by:



House Legal Counsel

Date:

4-8-26

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 15, 2025

Second Special Session, 2025

H. B. 24-28

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To establish a grand jury system in the Commonwealth for use in criminal investigations and prosecutions, and to provide for related powers and procedures.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24TH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that the
2 Commonwealth lacks a formal statutory mechanism for compelling testimony and
3 the production of documents during the investigative stage of a criminal case. This
4 limitation hampers the ability of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to fully
5 investigate serious crimes, including complex financial crimes, public corruption,
6 and organized criminal activity. Without the ability to issue subpoenas prior to
7 charging decisions, investigations may stall or rely solely on voluntary cooperation,
8 which can hinder effective law enforcement and public accountability.

9 Under current Commonwealth law and practice, criminal prosecutions are
10 initiated by the Attorney General through the filing of a criminal complaint or
11 information, followed by a preliminary examination in the Superior Court to
12 determine probable cause. The Commonwealth does not presently employ a grand

1 jury system, and there is no statutory authority for the OAG to compel testimony
2 or documents in aid of a criminal investigation unless charges have already been
3 filed. In contrast, most U.S. jurisdictions use grand juries both as investigative
4 bodies with subpoena authority and as decision-making bodies for determining
5 whether to return indictments.

6 To address this gap and strengthen the Commonwealth's criminal justice
7 system, this Act establishes a grand jury process as an optional investigative and
8 charging mechanism. This Act also empowers the Superior Court to impanel grand
9 juries upon the request of the Attorney General and authorizes grand juries to issue
10 subpoenas, hear testimony, and return indictments—also known as “True Bills”—
11 where probable cause exists. Use of the grand jury is discretionary and does not
12 displace or limit the Attorney General's authority to proceed by criminal complaint
13 or information under existing law.

14 Grand jury proceedings under this Act are investigatory and non-adversarial
15 in nature, and the accused and their legal counsel do not participate in or attend
16 these proceedings. This structure is consistent with established practice in other
17 jurisdictions, where grand juries serve to assess whether charges should be brought,
18 not to determine guilt or innocence. The right to confront witnesses and present a
19 defense is preserved in any subsequent prosecution, where full due process
20 protections apply.

21 Thus, this Act is intended to enhance the investigative tools available to the

1 Office of the Attorney General, ensure proper oversight of charging decisions
2 through citizen participation, and safeguard the rights of individuals through
3 procedural protections and judicial review. By incorporating a grand jury process
4 into the Commonwealth's legal framework, the Legislature aims to promote
5 effective and transparent criminal investigations while maintaining flexibility in
6 how prosecutions are initiated.

7 **Section 2. Enactment.** Chapter 10 of Division 6, Title 6 of the
8 Commonwealth Code is hereby enacted to read as follows:

9 **"Chapter 10. Grand Jury**

10 **§ 61001. Definitions.**

11 As used in this Chapter:

12 (a) "Attorney General" means the Attorney General of the
13 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or any Assistant
14 Attorney General, investigator, or legal representative acting under the
15 Attorney General's authority in connection with a grand jury proceeding.

16 (b) "Foreperson" means the member of the grand jury appointed
17 by the Superior Court to preside over the grand jury's proceedings,
18 administer oaths, and sign indictments. The term includes the deputy
19 foreperson in the absence or incapacity of the foreperson.

20 (c) "Grand jury" means a body of citizens impaneled by the
21 Commonwealth Superior Court to conduct criminal investigations and

1 determine whether to return indictments.

2 (d) "Grand jury investigation" means any investigation conducted
3 under the authority of a grand jury, whether initiated by the grand jury
4 itself or presented to it by the Attorney General.

5 (e) "Indictment" means a formal written accusation returned by a
6 grand jury, charging a person with one or more criminal offenses based
7 on a finding of probable cause. An indictment may also be referred to as
8 a "True Bill."

9 (f) "No True Bill" means a formal determination by a grand jury
10 that the evidence presented does not establish probable cause to indict a
11 person for a criminal offense under investigation. A No True Bill is not
12 an acquittal, a finding of innocence, or a final judgment, and it does not
13 prevent the Attorney General from pursuing prosecution through other
14 lawful means.

15 (g) "Subpoena" means a legal order issued in the name of the
16 Commonwealth Superior Court, directing a person to appear before the
17 grand jury to testify or to produce specified documents, records, or other
18 evidence.

19 (h) "Target of the investigation" means a person as to whom the
20 grand jury or Attorney General has substantial evidence linking them to
21 the commission of a criminal offense and who is likely to be the subject

1 of an indictment.

2 (i) "Witness" means any person who is subpoenaed or otherwise
3 called to appear before the grand jury to provide testimony or evidence.

4 **§ 61002. Grand Jury Establishment and Composition.**

5 (a) A grand jury is hereby established as an instrumentality of the
6 Commonwealth Superior Court for the purpose of conducting criminal
7 investigations and considering whether to issue indictments. The
8 Superior Court shall impanel a grand jury when requested by the
9 Attorney General. The Attorney General's request to impanel a grand
10 jury shall be made in writing to the Superior Court and shall include a
11 general description of the subject matter to be investigated. The request
12 need not identify specific individuals or allegations, but must provide
13 sufficient detail to establish the nature and scope of the investigation. The
14 court may file the request under seal to preserve grand jury secrecy. The
15 decision to utilize a grand jury for purposes of indictment shall be at the
16 discretion of the Attorney General, and nothing in this Chapter shall be
17 construed to require the use of a grand jury as the exclusive method for
18 initiating criminal prosecutions.

19 (b) A grand jury shall consist of not fewer than 16 and not more
20 than 23 jurors, drawn at random from the same pool of eligible citizens
21 used for trial juries in the Commonwealth. To the extent practicable, the

1 grand jury should represent a fair cross-section of the community. All
2 grand jurors must meet the qualifications for jurors under
3 Commonwealth law. The Court may also select a reasonable number of
4 alternate grand jurors, who will attend all sessions and replace any juror
5 who is unable to continue.

6 (c) A grand jury shall serve for a term not to exceed six (6) months,
7 unless an extension of up to an additional six months is approved by the
8 Presiding Judge upon a showing of continuing investigative need. The
9 grand jury may be discharged earlier by the Court once its business is
10 concluded or if the Attorney General and the Court find that its
11 continuation is no longer in the public interest.

12 **§ 61003. Grand Jury Proceedings and Powers.**

13 (a) Grand jurors shall be sworn to diligently inquire into crimes
14 committed within the Commonwealth and to keep secret the proceedings
15 of the grand jury. The court shall appoint one of the jurors as the
16 foreperson and another as deputy foreperson. The foreperson or deputy
17 foreperson will preside over grand jury sessions and may administer
18 oaths to witnesses.

19 (b) A majority of the total grand jurors, not including alternates,
20 constitutes a quorum to conduct business. An affirmative vote of at least
21 12 grand jurors is required to return an indictment (a "True Bill"). If

1 fewer than 12 grand jurors concur, the result is no indictment (a “No True
2 Bill”).

3 (c) The grand jury is empowered to issue subpoenas to compel the
4 attendance and testimony of witnesses, as well as the production of
5 documents, records, and other physical evidence relevant to any matter
6 within its investigation. Subpoenas shall be issued in the name of the
7 Commonwealth Superior Court and may be initiated in one of two ways:

8 (1) Ex parte, at the request of the Attorney General, without
9 prior vote of the grand jury, provided the subpoena relates to a matter
10 within the scope of the grand jury’s investigation; or

11 (2) Upon the vote of a majority of the grand jurors, based on
12 their own deliberations or concerns.

13 (d) All subpoenas must describe with reasonable particularity the
14 testimony, documents, or objects sought, and must state the date, time,
15 and location for compliance. Each subpoena shall inform the witness of
16 their right to consult an attorney and to invoke applicable privileges.
17 Each subpoena shall also contain a brief general description of the
18 subject matter of the grand jury’s investigation, sufficient to allow the
19 recipient to understand the nature of the inquiry and to assert any legal
20 objections or privileges. This description shall not disclose the identity
21 of any target of the investigation unless necessary. All subpoenas shall

1 bear the signature of either the grand jury foreperson or an authorized
2 prosecutor and shall clearly indicate that they are issued in connection
3 with a grand jury investigation.

4 (e) The Attorney General may, without prior vote of the grand jury,
5 apply ex parte to the Superior Court for judicial approval of a subpoena.
6 Upon approval by a judge, the clerk of court shall issue the subpoena
7 under seal of the court. When a subpoena is issued without a prior vote
8 of the grand jury, the Attorney General shall notify the grand jury of the
9 subpoena's issuance at the next session of the grand jury. The grand jury
10 shall retain the authority, by majority vote, to disapprove and revoke any
11 subpoena issued at the Attorney General's request that was not
12 previously voted on by the grand jury. A subpoena disapproved or
13 revoked by the grand jury may not be enforced or further relied upon,
14 and the Attorney General shall take reasonable steps to withdraw or
15 suspend its effect if already served.

16 (f) A grand jury subpoena may be served by any police officer,
17 investigator of the OAG, or other person authorized to serve process,
18 who is not a grand juror and is at least 18 years of age. Service may be
19 made anywhere within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana
20 Islands. The service shall be effected by delivering a copy of the
21 subpoena to the person named, or to a proper agent or officer if the

1 recipient is an entity, and informing them of the general nature of the
2 inquiry. The person serving the subpoena shall tender any witness fee or
3 other obligation required by law at the time of service, unless such
4 payment is waived or deferred pursuant to law or court rule. Proof of
5 service shall be filed with the court by the server, noting the date, time,
6 and manner of service.

7 (g) Grand jury proceedings shall be conducted in secret. Only the
8 following persons may be present in the grand jury room during sessions:
9 grand jurors; the Attorney General or designated prosecutors and their
10 necessary assistants; interpreters, if needed; a court reporter or recording
11 technician as authorized by the Attorney General or the Court for the
12 purpose of making a record of proceedings; and the testifying witness.
13 No person under investigation may be present in the grand jury room
14 except when called to testify as a witness. A witness who is called to
15 testify may consult with their counsel outside the grand jury room.
16 Prosecutors may present evidence, examine witnesses, and provide legal
17 opinions to the grand jurors on matters of law. A verbatim record, such
18 as a transcript or audio recording, of grand jury witness testimony and
19 any instructions on the law shall be maintained under seal, accessible
20 only to the prosecutors, the court, or later to the defendant, if required by
21 law for purposes of discovery, impeachment, or as otherwise authorized

1 by the court upon a showing of particularized need. Grand jurors and all
2 persons present must maintain the secrecy of the proceedings. Any
3 person who violates grand jury secrecy without authorization may be
4 punished for contempt of court or as otherwise provided by law.

5 (h) The grand jury is not authorized to issue public reports,
6 statements, findings, or recommendations. Its authority is limited to
7 conducting investigations and determining whether to return an
8 indictment.

9 **§ 61004. Witness Rights, Immunities, and Privileges.**

10 (a) Any witness appearing before the grand jury shall be examined
11 under oath and must answer all questions and produce all evidence
12 lawfully demanded by the grand jury, except where a valid privilege or
13 constitutional protection applies. Witnesses are entitled to all privileges
14 guaranteed by Commonwealth and federal law, including, but not limited
15 to, the privilege against self-incrimination under the Fifth Amendment
16 of the U.S. Constitution and Article I, Section 5 of the CNMI
17 Constitution, attorney-client privilege, spousal privilege, and any other
18 established privilege. Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed to
19 abrogate any legal privilege or to compel a witness to incriminate
20 themselves without proper safeguards.

21 (b) If a witness asserts the privilege against self-incrimination, the

1 grand jury and the Attorney General shall not compel the witness to
2 testify, unless the Attorney General requests and obtains a court order
3 granting immunity to that witness. Upon request of the Attorney General,
4 the Commonwealth Superior Court may issue an order conferring
5 immunity, as provided by law, to compel the testimony of a witness who
6 has invoked the right against self-incrimination. Such an order shall
7 guarantee that no testimony or other information directly or indirectly
8 derived from that testimony can be used against the witness in any
9 criminal case, except a prosecution for perjury or false statements
10 committed during the testimony. Once immunity is granted, the witness
11 is required to answer the grand jury's questions. Refusal to testify after
12 immunity is granted may be punished as contempt.

13 (c) A witness subpoenaed to testify may consult with an attorney
14 prior to testifying and may have an attorney available during their grand
15 jury appearance. Although counsel for the witness may not be present
16 inside the grand jury room during testimony, the witness may, at
17 reasonable intervals, be excused from the grand jury room to consult with
18 legal counsel. If the witness cannot afford counsel and is a target of the
19 investigation, the court may appoint counsel for the witness for the
20 limited purpose of advising on self-incrimination issues, consistent with
21 the witness's constitutional rights.

1 **§ 61005. Motions to Quash or Modify Subpoena; Challenge to**
2 **Grand Jury Composition.**

3 (a) Any person or entity receiving a grand jury subpoena may,
4 before the return date specified, file a motion in the Commonwealth
5 Superior Court to quash or modify the subpoena. The motion may be
6 based on any appropriate legal grounds, including but not limited to: the
7 subpoena does not reasonably relate to the subject matter of a legitimate
8 grand jury investigation; the subpoena is excessively broad or unduly
9 burdensome; the subpoena seeks privileged or otherwise protected
10 information; or the service or issuance of the subpoena was defective.
11 Such motion shall be filed under seal and shall be heard by the
12 supervising judge of the grand jury or another judge designated by the
13 court. The Attorney General may respond under seal. The court may
14 quash or modify the subpoena if compliance would be unreasonable,
15 oppressive, or unlawful, or may direct compliance subject to specified
16 conditions, including those imposed by a separate protective order, such
17 as the redaction of privileged material, limitations on disclosure, or other
18 safeguards necessary to protect confidential or privileged information. In
19 camera proceedings may be used to determine claims of privilege or
20 relevance while maintaining grand jury secrecy.

21 (b) A defendant may challenge the array of grand jurors or an

1 individual grand juror on the ground that the selection process was not in
2 accordance with law or that a juror was not legally qualified. Such a
3 challenge must be raised by motion before trial. If the court finds that
4 grand jury selection did not substantially comply with legal
5 requirements, it may dismiss any indictment returned without prejudice.
6 Minor irregularities that did not prejudice the defendant's rights or the
7 integrity of the process shall not be grounds to dismiss an indictment.

8 **§ 61006. Indictments and No True Bills.**

9 (a) If the grand jury finds, based on the evidence presented, that
10 there is probable cause to believe a particular person has committed a
11 criminal offense, it may return an indictment. An indictment is a written
12 statement of the essential facts constituting the offense charged, signed
13 by the foreperson of the grand jury. Each indictment shall be presented
14 in open court by the foreperson or his designee to a judge of the Superior
15 Court. The indictment itself shall be filed under seal and may be made
16 public as the court directs. Upon the return of an indictment in open court,
17 the Superior Court is authorized to proceed with arraignment and trial as
18 in any other criminal case. After the return of an indictment and upon a
19 request made by the Attorney General, the Superior Court shall cause a
20 warrant of arrest or summons to be issued against the accused. An
21 indictment returned by the grand jury shall carry the same legal effect as

1 an information filed by the Attorney General. The Attorney General is
2 not required to use the grand jury process to initiate prosecution and may
3 proceed by criminal complaint or information as otherwise authorized by
4 law.

5 (b) If the grand jury votes not to indict on a charge that was under
6 consideration, the foreperson shall report a "No True Bill" to the court.
7 A No True Bill shall be filed under seal. The target of the investigation
8 does not acquire any vested right or immunity from prosecution by virtue
9 of a No True Bill, and the Attorney General retains the discretion to later
10 file a criminal complaint or information for the same offense, or it may
11 seek a new grand jury indictment, if new evidence emerges or if the
12 Attorney General determines that the interests of justice so require.

13 **§ 61007. Contempt and Enforcement.**

14 (a) If any person neglects or refuses to comply with a grand jury
15 subpoena without lawful excuse, the Attorney General may apply to the
16 Superior Court for an order to show cause why the person should not be
17 held in contempt. Upon application, or on its own initiative, the court
18 may issue such an order and shall provide the person an opportunity to
19 be heard. If the court finds that the failure to comply was willful and
20 without lawful justification, it may hold the person in contempt. The
21 court may exercise its authority to impose either civil or criminal

1 contempt in accordance with applicable law and the nature of the
2 violation. Remedies include ordering immediate compliance, imposing
3 coercive fines, or committing the person to custody until compliance is
4 achieved. Any period of confinement for civil contempt shall be solely
5 for the purpose of compelling compliance, shall be subject to judicial
6 oversight, and shall not exceed the duration of the grand jury's term.

7 (b) If a witness appears before the grand jury but refuses to answer
8 a question or produce evidence, and the court determines that the refusal
9 is not justified by a valid privilege or other lawful excuse, the court may
10 proceed as in subsection (a).

11 (c) A person held in contempt under this Section shall have the
12 right to appeal the contempt finding. The court shall consider any such
13 appeal on an expedited basis, giving due regard to the liberty interest at
14 stake. Where appropriate, the court may order immediate confinement
15 for contempt, including, but not limited to, cases in which a person has
16 been granted immunity under § 61004(b) and still refuses to testify. If a
17 person willfully fails to produce subpoenaed documents or objects, the
18 court may issue a warrant for the seizure of such materials or grant any
19 other appropriate relief, consistent with the person's legal rights.

20 (d) Any witness who knowingly gives materially false testimony
21 under oath before the grand jury may be prosecuted for perjury under

1 applicable law, in addition to any contempt sanctions the court may
2 impose.

3 **§ 61008. Supplementary Procedures and Rule-Making.**

4 (a) The Commonwealth Supreme Court may promulgate rules of
5 court governing grand jury procedures and the issuance and enforcement
6 of grand jury subpoenas, to the extent not inconsistent with this Chapter.
7 Such rules may include additional provisions for secrecy, the recording
8 and transcribing of testimony, maintaining transcripts or recordings,
9 selection and excuse of jurors, procedures for administering oaths,
10 procedures governing the disclosure of grand jury records, and any other
11 procedural safeguards or clarification of process. In the absence of
12 specific provisions in this Chapter or court rules, the practice in the
13 United States federal courts regarding grand juries may serve as a
14 persuasive guide, insofar as it is applicable to the Commonwealth's
15 circumstances and not in conflict with Commonwealth law or
16 constitutional provisions.

17 **§ 61009. No Limitation on Alternate Processes.**

18 (a) Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed to require an
19 indictment by grand jury for any criminal prosecution in the
20 Commonwealth.

21 The Attorney General retains full authority to initiate criminal

1 proceedings by criminal complaint or information and to proceed
2 through preliminary examination in accordance with applicable law and
3 court rules.

4 (b) This Chapter establishes an alternative mechanism for initiating
5 prosecution, particularly suited to complex, sensitive, or high-profile
6 cases, but does not eliminate or supersede existing charging procedures.
7 Where an indictment has been returned by a grand jury, a separate
8 preliminary examination shall not be required. The absence of a grand
9 jury indictment shall not preclude prosecution by other lawful means.”

10 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of
11 any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court
12 of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its
13 provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid
14 shall not be affected thereby.

15 **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall
16 not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired
17 under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the
18 statutes. Repealers in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or
19 pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of
20 terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall
21 already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

Prefiled: 5/6/2025

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:
/s/ Joseph M. Hallahan
 House Legal Counsel

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