



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

**CHRISTINA M.E. SABLAN**  
CHAIRPERSON  
HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22-29

DATE: October 18, 2021

RE: HOUSE BILL No. 22-15

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

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Health and Welfare to which House Bill No. 22-15 was referred, entitled:

“To establish the Foster Care Sponsorship Program under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Division of Youth Services; and for other purposes.”

begs leave to report as follows:

## **I. RECOMMENDATION:**

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that H. B. No. 22-15 be passed by the House in its current form.

HOUSE CLERK'S OFFICE  
RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*  
DATE 10/20/2021 TIME 11:16a

## II. ANALYSIS:

### A. Purpose:

The purpose of House Bill No. 22-15 is to establish the Foster Care Sponsorship Program to provide additional social and other services, financial support and supplies to the children under the direct care and supervision of the Division of Youth Services under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

### C. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that the Division of Youth Services (DYS) under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA) takes a proactive approach in actively engaging in our community to fulfill its mission to “promote the well-being of children, youths, and adults to strengthen families and the community as whole”. DYS-DCCA provides numerous programs to our community that serve: victims of child abuse or neglect and their families; juvenile offenders and their families; youth and parents; low income households; and homeless individuals and families.

Your Committee finds that that the DYS-DCCA’s Child Protective Services (CPS) unit currently operates on a 24/7 response system for all children under their direct care or supervision or reported cases that may arise. The Child Protective Services is legally mandated to protect children who have been abused or neglected, or who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. Through its mandate, the Child Protective Services responds and intervenes in reported cases of maltreatment of a child of 17 years of age or younger, providing multiple accommodations to protect the emotional, mental, and physical development of a child. Additionally, the Child Protective Services unit also provides direct supervision in the placement of a child under their Foster Care Program, which provides for a long-term care for children who cannot reside with their families for a period of time. Eligible kin or foster parents are carefully screened and regularly monitored to ensure that a child placed in their care is at no risk for maltreatment.

Your Committee further finds that the resources of the Foster Care Program under the CPS-DYS-DCCA are scarce and funds are continuously needed to help our children and youth in foster care. Although DYS’s ultimate goal is for family reunification, the current program continues to experience longer placements in foster or kinship homes due to multiple factors preventing such reunification.

Your Committee finds that this Act will establish a Foster Care Sponsorship Program (FCSP) to serve as an extended program of the Child Protective Services and shall be managed under the Administrator of the Division of Youth Services under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs. The program may work with community-based private

nonprofit or for-profit agencies, public agencies, and interested citizen groups in the establishment of community foster care programs, benefits and services.

Your Committee further finds that the services made available through the Foster Care Sponsorship Program shall: (1) in addition to meeting basic needs of the children, offer access to available services that address educational benefits and training, social and emotional difficulties, medical issues, developmental delays, learning problems, psychological and psychiatric issues, and behavioral challenges; (2) be sensitive to the unique needs, strengths, and cultural values of a foster child and foster family; (3) be driven by community strengths, needs, and resources; and (4) accept and use a variety of funds and resources, including but not limited to, legislative appropriation, DCCA funding, federal grants, CNMI grants, community donations, private and volunteer resources, in-kind, community investments, and others to provide basic necessities and additional social and other services, financial support and supplies necessary for the care and welfare of the foster children.

Your Committee is cognizant that DYS-DCCA is a recipient of a Consolidated Block Grant-Social Services Block Grant (CBG-SSBG) that will provide much needed financial assistance in covering the costs of most of the services provided to the community. However, similarly to all grants, the expenditure of funds through the CBG-SSBG serves as a supplemental funding source that is restricted and insufficient to cover all costs relative to the direct needs of our community, most importantly for the children under the direct care and supervision of DYS-DCCA. This Act will give the Administrator the authority to provide other incentives and expand the program from what DYS is currently offering to recruit and retain foster parents. DYS will also be able to seek other funding sources beyond legislative appropriations and federal grants to ensure the program's success.

Your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 22-15 and recommends its passage in its current form.

E. Public Comments/Public Hearing:

In a public meeting held on August 27, 2021, the Committee received oral testimonies from the following:

- Vivian Sablan, Administrator, Division of Youth Services, DCCA

“We are here in support of the Foster Care Sponsorship Bill, House Bill 22-15. We’ve been providing a letter of support, written support but this morning we are just going to give you guys a brief background. So when children are removed from home, they are usually placed temporarily at our DYS Emergency Shelter. However, if it is determined that it’s in the best interest of the child and a longer placement is needed that’s when the program seeks out for foster care placement. As of today, we have a total of 34 clients placed in 9 different households. We used to average 10 to 15 per year. In FY2019 we were able to receive \$90,000 from our



local appropriations, however, in 2020 that was removed. I think that's what kinda sparked the initiation of this discussion. So with that we used to give \$250 stipend per child, per month. Just to kind of assist with the living cost. \$250 is truly nothing so we actually got our grantor to approve \$400 per child, per month back in 2015. Today, that's still not enough so we are kind of working to also increase that but with the number of clients that we have at 34 today that will cost DYS about \$163,000 and that's just as of today. If we were to bring in more foster care clients between now and or next year because we go by the fiscal year, it will eventually cost us more. But we can look at it as an average."

" We had some input in the drafting of House Bill No. 22-15."

- Julian Camacho, Supervisor, Child Protective Services and Foster Care Coordinator, DYS-DCCA

"Currently we have 6 children in our shelter looking for foster parents. We had some people that are interested in joining the program but they want new born babies, they do not want, like older kids. So we are running into that. We are still looking for foster care parents. I have 6 and 1 has been in shelter for over five years."

Comments received have been attached as part of this committee report. Oral testimonies can be available for public inspection upon request.

#### E. Legislative History:

House Bill No. 22-15 was introduced by Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero on February 19, 2021 and was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Health and Welfare for disposition.

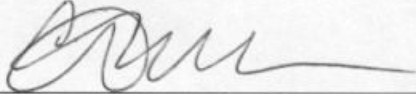
#### F. Cost Benefit Analysis:

The enactment of House Bill No. 22-15 will result in additional cost to the CNMI Government in the form of administrative costs and other resources needed to effectively carry out the intent of the proposed legislation. However, the proposed legislation provides the Division of Youth Services to accept and use a variety of funds and resources, including but not limited to, legislative appropriations, DDCA funding, federal grants, CNMI grants, community donations, private and volunteer resources, in-kind, community investments, and others to provide basic necessities and additional social and other services, financial support and supplies necessary for the care and welfare of the children in their program.


**III. CONCLUSION:**

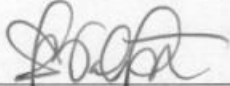
The Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of HOUSE BILL NO. 22-15, and recommends its passage in its current form.

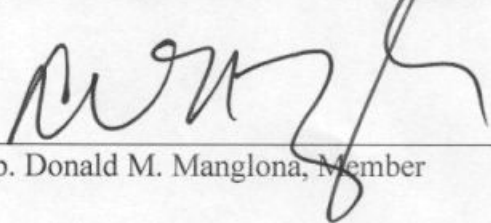
Respectfully submitted,

  
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Rep. Christina M.E. Sablan, Chairperson

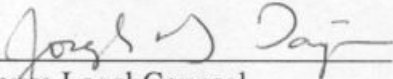
  
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Rep. Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Vice Chair

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

  
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Rep. Sheila J. Babauta, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Donald M. Manglona, Member

Reviewed by:

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

**Attachments:**

- Letter dated April 24, 2021, Administrator, Division of Youth Services, DCCA
- Foster Care Program submitted by DYS Administrator
- Voting Record for passage of HB22-15 (in its current form) dated October 18, 2021



# DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS



## OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Building 1300, P.O. Box 501000 C.K., Saipan, MP 96950

April 24, 2021

Congresswoman Christina Sablan  
Chairperson  
Health & Welfare Committee  
22<sup>nd</sup> CNMI House of Representatives  
Saipan, MP 96950

Re: *DCCA-Division of Youth Services' Comments on H.B. 22-14 and H.B. 22-15*

Dear Congresswoman Sablan:

The Department of Community & Cultural Affairs Division of Youth Services (DCCA-DYS) hereby submits the following comments:

House Bill 22-14: To establish the Department of Corrections Mental Health Unit; and for other purposes.

### Comment (s):

1. It is recommended that the committee also seeks the comments/questions of the Behavioral Health Planning Council. The Council is chaired by Mr. Tai Doram whose email is [tai.doram@gmail.com](mailto:tai.doram@gmail.com).
2. We are 100% in favor of the family visitation and preparation for re-entry. DYS initiated the Parents Anonymous Support Group, Inc. weekly meetings for inmates with children that are nearing release. As soon as restrictions are eased up, DYS can resume these services.
3. The team is in support of the intentions of the proposed house bill 22-14 as we also believe that mental health needs must be addressed both during incarceration and as individuals re-enter back into the community. However, please see questions.

**Question (s):**

1. **Would this bill include the juveniles that are detained at the Dept. of Corrections?**
2. **For DYS, it has been a constant challenge securing clinical/psychotherapy services for children and parents served by DYS, which may be of concern, noting that most psychotherapy services with the proposed Mental Health Unit may be "inpatient." Currently, our programs coordinate with CHCC Community Guidance clinics for services and one (1) private provider on island. We are now reaching out to Guam providers to coordinate psychotherapy sessions for DYS clients.**

House Bill 22-15: To establish the Foster Care Sponsorship program within the Department of Community & Cultural Affairs Division of Youth Services; and for other purposes.

**Comment (s):**

1. **The team is in support of the proposed house bill 22-15.**
2. **The funding "FY 2021" has already been addressed as it originally stated "FY 2020" in the earlier draft that was sent to DYS March 2021.**
3. **Please state it as "DCCA-DYS" instead of "DYS-DCCA."**

If you shall have any questions or need additional information, I may also be reached at 670-237-1003/285-2553 or via email at [vsablan@dys.gov.mp](mailto:vsablan@dys.gov.mp).

Thank you for your continued partnership with DYS' family strengthening efforts in the CNMI!

Respectfully,



Vivian T. Sablan  
DYS Administrator

Cc:

*DCCA Secretary  
DYS Unit/Program Supervisors*



Submitted: House Comm. on Health & Welfare  
Vivian Sablan, Administrator  
Division of Youth Services  
Dept. of Comm & Cultural Affairs  
Aug. 27, 2021

## FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

When children are removed for protective custody, a temporary placement is coordinated at the DYS Emergency Shelter or a family placement when one is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

If longer placement is needed, arrangements are made under the Foster Care Program.

Stipend: Address basic needs of clients in foster/kinship homes

- Average 10-15 a year
- Current # at 34 clients
- Cost per year \$163,200
  
- \$250.00, 2015 increased to \$400
- FY 2019-\$90K local funding, however, was removed on the 2020 budget
- FY 2020, Awarded \$59,000 VOCA Funds from CIPA
- FY 20212, Awarded \$54,000 VOCA Funds from CIPA

Foster Care Sponsorship Bill will allow for:

- Additional support service delivery (counseling, etc.)
- Additional Stipend costs to assist in covering basic expenses for foster children.
- Additional incentive for foster parents
- Supplies, including incidental Expenses

Current Support: Stipend, assessments, transportation, counseling, hospital check-up and other appointments, school supplies, clothing/footwear, medication

Challenge: Securing foster parents

1336



**HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND WELFARE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
TWENTY-SECOND CNMI LEGISLATURE**

**VOICE/ROLL CALL VOTE**

**DATE:** October 18, 2021


**MOTION:** To draft a Standing Committee Report for the passage of HB 22-15, "To establish the Foster Care Sponsorship Program under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Division of Youth Services; and for other purposes." in its current form.

**MOTION OFFERED BY:** Rep. Sheila J. Babauta

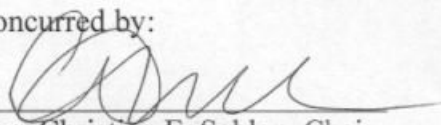
**MOTION SECONDED BY:** Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao

COMMITTEE MEMBERS			Present
1	<b>Chairperson</b>	Christina Marie Elise Sablan	X
2	<b>Vice Chairperson</b>	Leila Haveia Fleming Clark Staffler	EXCUSED
3	<b>Representative</b>	Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao	X
4	<b>Representative</b>	Sheila Therese Jack Babauta	X
5	<b>Representative</b>	Donald Manalang Manglona	EXCUSED

**(VOICE) ACTION TAKEN:** Chair declares that the "ayes" have it and the motion is carried.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clarissa Sablan, House Legislative Assistant

Date: 10/18/21

Concurred by:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Christina E. Sablan, Chair

Date: 10/19/2021

**TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH  
LEGISLATURE**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**FEBRUARY 19, 2021**

**First Regular Session, 2021**

**H. B. 22-15**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To establish the Foster Care Sponsorship Program under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Division of Youth Services; and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE 22<sup>ND</sup> NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1           **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that the Division  
2 of Youth Services (DYS) under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs  
3 (DCCA) take a proactive approach in actively engaging in our community to fulfill  
4 their mission to “promote the well-being of children, youths, and adults to  
5 strengthen families and the community as whole”. DYS-DCCA provides numerous  
6 programs to our community that serve: victims of child abuse or neglect and their  
7 families; juvenile offenders and their families; prevention program for the youths  
8 and parents in the community; low income households; and homeless individuals  
9 and families.

10           The Legislature further finds that DYS-DCCA is a recipient of a  
11 Consolidated Block Grant-Social Services Block Grant (CBG-SSBG) for Fiscal  
12 Year 2021 that will provide much needed financial assistance in covering the costs

1 of most of the services provided to the community. However, similarly to all grants,  
2 the expenditure of funds through the CBG-SSBG serves as a supplemental funding  
3 source that is restricted and insufficient to cover all costs relative to the direct needs  
4 of our community, most importantly for the children under the direct care and  
5 supervision of DYS-DCCA.

6 The Legislature finds that the DYS-DCCA's Child Protective Services  
7 (CPS) unit currently operates on a 24/7 response system for all children under their  
8 direct care or supervision or reported cases that may arise. The Child Protective  
9 Services is legally mandated to protect children who have been abused, neglected,  
10 or who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. Through its mandate, the Child Protective  
11 Services responds and intervenes to reported cases of maltreatment of a child of 17  
12 years of age or younger, providing multiple accommodations to protect the  
13 emotional, mental, and physical development of a child. Additionally, the Child  
14 Protective Services unit also provides direct supervision in the placement of a child  
15 under their Foster Care Program, which provides for a long-term care for children  
16 that cannot reside with their families for a period of time. Eligible kinship or foster  
17 parents are carefully screened and regularly monitored to ensure that a child placed  
18 in their care is at no risk for maltreatment.

19 Additionally, the Legislature finds that the resources of the Foster Care  
20 Program under the CPS-DYS-DCCA are scarce and funds are continuously needed  
21 to help our children and youths through foster care. Although DYS's ultimate goal



1 is for family reunification, the current program continues to experience longer  
2 placements in foster or kinship homes due to multiple factors preventing such  
3 reunification in many cases. Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to establish the  
4 Foster Care Sponsorship Program to provide additional social and other services,  
5 financial support and supplies to the children under the direct care and supervision  
6 of the Division of Youth Services under the Department of Community and  
7 Cultural Affairs.

8           **Section 2. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision  
9 Commission, the following is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10                   **“Article XX. Foster Care Sponsorship Program.**

11                   **§101. Title.** This article may be cited as the “Commonwealth Foster  
12 Care Sponsorship Program”.

13                   **§102. Foster Care Sponsorship Program.**

14                   (a) There is established a Foster Care Sponsorship Program (FCSP)  
15 to serve as an extended program of the Child Protective Services and shall  
16 be managed under the Administrator of the Division of Youth Services  
17 under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

18                   (b) The Foster Care Sponsorship Program may work with  
19 community-based private nonprofit or for-profit agencies, public agencies,  
20 and interested citizen groups in the establishment of community foster care  
21 programs, benefits and services.

1           **§103. Purpose.** The Department in coordination with the DYS  
2 Administrator, shall, under the Foster Care Sponsorship Program (FCSP)  
3 provide all children who are 17 years of age or younger and under the direct  
4 care and supervision of the DCCA-DYS Child Protective Services with  
5 additional social and other services, financial support and supplies  
6 necessary for the care and welfare of the children.

7           **§ 104. Services; Requirements.** The foster care services made  
8 available through the Commonwealth Foster Care Sponsorship Program  
9 shall:

10           (a) in addition to meeting basic needs of the children, offer access to  
11 available services that address educational benefits and training, social and  
12 emotional difficulties, medical issues, developmental delays, learning  
13 problems, psychological and psychiatric issues, and behavioral challenges.

14           (b) be sensitive to the unique needs, strengths, and cultural values of  
15 a foster child and foster family.

16           (c) be driven by community strengths, needs, and resources.

17           (d) accept and use a variety of funds and resources, including but  
18 not limited to, legislative appropriation, DCCA funding, federal grants,  
19 CNMI grants, community donations, private and volunteer resources, in-  
20 kind, community investments, and others to provide basic necessities and  
21 additional social and other services, financial support and supplies

1 necessary for the care and welfare of the foster children.

2 **§105. Rules and Regulations.** The Department in coordination with  
3 the DYS Administrator shall promulgate rules and regulations for the Foster  
4 Care Sponsorship Program (FCSP) to augment the services provided under  
5 the Child Protective Services. The Department or Division shall not receive  
6 any monetary donation until adoption and publication of the FCSP rules and  
7 regulations.

8 **§106. Reporting Requirement.** The Secretary of the Department of  
9 Community and Cultural Affairs in collaboration with the Administrator of  
10 the Division of Youth Services, shall report on the progress of the Foster  
11 Care Sponsorship Program (FCSP) on a quarterly basis to the governor and  
12 the presiding officers of the legislature. Report shall include all monetary  
13 donations received by private individuals and organizations with a detailed  
14 narrative of the expenses made to care for a child under the FCSP for  
15 educational materials or participation, nutritional, hygienic, clothing,  
16 bedding, medical, day-to-day needs, additional social and other services,  
17 financial support and supplies. For confidentiality purposes, the report shall  
18 not include the name of the individual child.”

19 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of  
20 any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court  
21 of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its



1 provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid  
2 shall not be affected thereby.

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

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

Prefiled: 2/4/2021

Date: 2/4/2021

Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero  
/s/ Rep. Angel A. Demapan

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ John F. Cool  
House Legal Counsel