

TWENTY-THIRD NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

_____ Session, 2024

H. B. 23- 117

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 23RD 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 numerous studies conducted have
8 highlighted the benefits of implementing electronic licensing management systems,
9 such as the case of the Online Single Submission system in Indonesia. These digital
10 platforms not only reduce bureaucratic red tape but also enhance user convenience
11 by allowing businesses to complete the necessary paperwork remotely, without the
12 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 is
19 amended by adding Article 5, which shall read as follows:

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

21 **§ 101. Definitions.**

- 1 a) "Digital program" refers to an online platform or system designed
- 2 to facilitate the application, processing, and issuance of business
- 3 licenses and permits.
- 4 b) "Business license" refers to the official authorization issued by the
- 5 CNMI Government that allows an individual or entity to operate a
- 6 business within the Commonwealth.
- 7 c) "Permit" refers to the official authorization required for specific
- 8 business activities, constructions, operations, or uses, issued by
- 9 the appropriate regulatory agencies within the CNMI
- 10 Government."

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

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

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

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

- 21 a) An online portal where businesses can submit applications for

- 1 licenses and permits.
- 2 b) A system for tracking the status of applications in real-time.
- 3 c) Electronic payment options for fees associated with licenses and
- 4 permits.
- 5 d) A centralized database accessible to all relevant regulatory
- 6 agencies to ensure efficient processing and coordination.
- 7 e) Automated notifications to applicants regarding the status of their
- 8 applications, required documentation, and deadlines.
- 9 f) A customer support system to assist applicants with navigating the
- 10 digital program and resolving any issues.

11 **§ 104. Implementation Timeline.**

12 The Department of Commerce, in collaboration with relevant

13 regulatory agencies, shall develop and launch the digital program

14 within 18 months from the effective date of this Act. A progress report

15 shall be submitted to the Legislature every six months until the digital

16 program is fully implemented.

17 **§ 105. Training and Outreach.**

18 The Department of Commerce shall conduct training sessions and

19 provide resources to educate business owners and relevant

20 stakeholders on how to use the digital program. Outreach efforts shall

21 be made to ensure all business owners, especially those in remote

1 areas, are aware of the digital program and its benefits.

2 **§ 106. Help Center Establishment.**

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

6 b) The Help Center shall provide the following services:

- 7 1. Assistance with navigating the digital program.
- 8 2. Guidance on completing and submitting online
9 applications.
- 10 3. Technical support for issues related to the digital program.
- 11 4. Education resources and training sessions on using the
12 digital program.

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

16 **§ 107. Funding.**

17 The funding for the development and implementation of the digital
18 program, including the establishment for the Help Center, shall be
19 allocated from the general fund and may also include federal grants,
20 private sector partnerships, and other sources of funding deemed
21 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
4 necessary. An annual report on the performance of the digital
5 program, including user feedback and metrics on processing times and
6 efficiency, shall be submitted to the Legislature.”

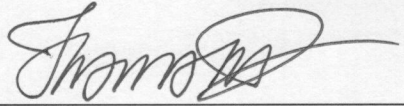
7 **Section 4. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of
8 any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court
9 of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its
10 provisions to persons or circumstances other than 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.

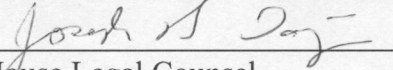
19 **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by
20 the Governor, or its becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 8/27/2024

Date: _____

Introduced by: 
Rep. Thomas John DLC. Manglona

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:


House Legal Counsel

