

**TWENTY-THIRD NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE**

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

_____ Regular Session, 2023

H. B. 23-

81

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To establish a permanent One Stop Shop Business License and
Permitting Center operated by the Department of Commerce
and to incorporate a seven (7) working day maximum waiting
period on all new business license and permitting applications;
and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE 23RD NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be cited as the “One Stop Business
2 License and Permitting Center Act 2023.”

3 **Section 2. Findings and Purposes.** The Legislature has been working on
4 trying to coordinate the licensing and permitting functions of the Commonwealth
5 of the Northern Mariana Islands government for many years. An early effort was
6 spearheaded by former Representative William Torres, who established a task force
7 consisting of government agencies to prepare a report of what was necessary to
8 accomplish this one stop concept since the enactment of Public Law 12-76 in 2000.

9 Over the years, there has been variations in the success of the One Stop
10 Center due to various logistical difficulties among and between agencies. For
11 example, all agencies are not equipped with the same technological tools to share

1 data, and not all licensing or permitting agencies work hand in hand together or
2 even know of policies that exist for them to carry out certain duties and
3 responsibilities. In order to solve the challenges and coordinate business license
4 and permitting across the government, the Legislature finds the need to establish in
5 statute the framework to stand a functional and true “one stop” licensing and
6 permitting center. To make the One Stop Licensing and Permitting Center a
7 permanent part of the government, the Legislature intends to centralize the
8 functions of each regulatory government entity that is involved in the licensing and
9 permitting of any business related establishment. It is further the intent to empower
10 the Secretary of the Department of Commerce to assume the administrative control
11 of the operations of the One Stop Licensing and Permitting Center.

12 **Section 3. Enactment.** Notwithstanding any laws or regulations to the
13 contrary and subject to proper codification by the CNMI Law Revision, the
14 following new provision is hereby enacted:

15 **“XX. CNMI One Stop Licensing and Permitting Center, established.**

16 The Secretary of the Department of Commerce shall have to establish a
17 CNMI One Stop Licensing and Permitting Center at a location convenient to the
18 public. The Center shall be available to the public, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm from
19 Monday through Friday, except CNMI legal holidays, and accommodations shall
20 be made to receive evening and weekend applications. The Authority shall use its
21 resources to coordinate the licensing and permitting requirements of all agencies of

1 the CNMI government whose licensing, permitting or other approval is necessary
2 for a business to start up or continue. These services shall be available to off island
3 investors as well as local entrepreneurs. Technological assistance will be offered
4 by the Department of Commerce to agencies who need it to participate adequately,
5 with the goal of streamlining the processes so that a business can be up and running,
6 or continuing its licensing and permitting for operations, in a matter of seven (7)
7 working days.

8 (1) The Authority shall coordinate and execute a Memorandum of
9 Understanding (MOU) with each CNMI government regulatory agency
10 involved in the licensing and permitting process to designate personnel
11 to carry out the mandates of the regulatory agency at the One Stop
12 Licensing and Permitting Center. The MOU shall clearly indicate that
13 the Secretary of the Department of Commerce shall have full
14 administrative control of such detail personnel.

15 (2) It is the policy of the CNMI government and the One Stop Licensing
16 and Permitting Center pursuant to XX to adjudicate all business
17 licensing and permitting applications within seven (7) working days.
18 Failure to adjudicate such application within seven (7) working days or
19 receipt, shall deem such application as approved for licensing or
20 permitting for a period of sixty (60) days. During this default approval
21 timeframe, the regulatory agencies involved in the approval process of

1 such application shall make the necessary recommendations to the
2 Secretary of the Department of Commerce for its final disposition.

3 **XX. Review of Existing Regulations.**

4 The Secretary of the Department of Commerce, shall within 90 days of the
5 enactment of this Act review all existing licensing and permitting regulations and
6 provide a report outlining any revisions needed to be made to the Governor of the
7 CNMI and to the Speaker of the House. The contents of this report shall take into
8 consideration any bureaucratic processes that may be recommended to be
9 eliminated, revised, or strengthened in the licensing and permitting of any
10 government regulated activity. Any recommendations shall meet the goals of
11 improved licensing and permitting process, while maintaining program integrity.

12 **XX. Funding.**

13 The Secretary of the Department of Commerce is authorized to use any
14 available funds within its budget to accomplish the goals of this legislation. It may
15 offer funds for technical assistance to agencies involved in the licensing and
16 permitting processes. Funding for the designated positions of each regulatory
17 agency detailed to the CNMI One Stop Licensing and Permitting Center shall be
18 collected from each respective agency or the transferring of designated positions

1 from each regulatory agency detailed to the CNMI One Stop Licensing and
2 Permitting Center will suffice.”

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

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

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

Prefiled: 10/12/2023

Date: _____

Introduced by: _____


Rep. Thomas J. DLC. Manglona

Introduction Purposes Only
Reviewed for ~~Legal Sufficiency~~ by:

Jay D. J.
House Legal Counsel