

TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

_____ Regular Session, 2022

H. J. R. 22- 12

A HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

To strongly encourage and endorse the issuance of a new local economic impact payment to provide direct and expedited financial relief to qualified households of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the expansion of eligibility for premium pay “bonuses” for essential workers in the government and private sector.

1 **WHEREAS**, the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana
2 Islands, like so many communities throughout the nation and the world, continue
3 to struggle with the wide-ranging and devastating impacts of the Covid-19
4 pandemic, including but not limited to illness and death, housing loss, food
5 insecurity, a strained healthcare system, government shutdowns, school and
6 business closures, increased unemployment, and severe economic decline; and
7 **WHEREAS**, the people of the Northern Marianas are also still recovering
8 and rebuilding from the extensive destruction caused by three catastrophic
9 typhoons: Typhoon Soudelor in August of 2015; Typhoon Mangkhut in September
10 of 2018; and Typhoon Yutu in October of 2018, all of which resulted in federal
11 declarations of disaster and local declarations of emergency; and

1 **WHEREAS**, in response to these multiple typhoon disasters and the
2 ongoing pandemic, the United States federal government has extended generous
3 and significant aid to the Commonwealth government totaling well over \$1 billion,
4 providing the resources needed to support the Commonwealth's response and
5 recovery efforts, strengthen social safety nets, bolster infrastructure, build resilient
6 homes and schools, cover shortfalls in government revenues, deliver assistance to
7 affected businesses and nonprofit organizations, and issue direct and expedited
8 financial relief to individuals and families;

9 **WHEREAS**, since March of 2020, the United States federal government
10 has issued three such rounds of direct and expedited financial relief to individuals
11 and families hard-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, in the form of economic impact
12 payments made to households that met income-based eligibility guidelines among
13 other requirements; and

14 **WHEREAS**, these federal relief measures included the Coronavirus Aid,
15 Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provided up to \$1,200 per
16 eligible adult and \$500 per qualifying child under age 17, in March of 2020; the
17 COVID-Related Tax Relief Act, which authorized up to \$600 per eligible adult and
18 up to \$600 per qualifying child under age 17, in December of 2020; and most
19 recently, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provided up to \$1,400 per
20 eligible adult and up to \$1,400 per qualifying dependent, including adult
21 dependents in March of 2021; and

1 **WHEREAS**, the American Rescue Plan Act further provides Fiscal
2 Recovery Funds that State, Local, and Tribal governments may use to respond to
3 the Covid-19 public health emergency and its economic impacts, including
4 assistance to households and small businesses among the eligible uses for these
5 funds; and

6 **WHEREAS**, in August of 2021, the Commonwealth government utilized
7 ARPA funds to issue “local stimulus” Visa debit cards in the amount of \$500 that
8 every tax filer received regardless of income; these cards could only be used within
9 the geographic boundaries of the Commonwealth and only at establishments that
10 accepted Visa, which unfortunately excluded many local businesses and critical
11 household expenses such as rent that residents could not use the cards to pay; and

12 **WHEREAS**, in December of 2021, Governor Ralph Torres announced
13 plans to disburse up to \$5,000 in premium pay “bonuses” to certain frontline
14 government employees of the executive branch, to be funded by ARPA, as well as
15 \$500 bonuses to Commonwealth government retirees; and

16 **WHEREAS**, as of January of 2022, many other individuals and families
17 throughout the Commonwealth are also in serious need of financial relief, including
18 thousands of Commonwealth residents who remain unemployed or underemployed
19 and still await long-overdue payments of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance
20 (PUA) and Commonwealth Covid-19 Emergency Rental Assistance (CCERA); and

1 **WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth government may opt to expand eligibility
2 for premium pay “bonuses” provided under ARPA, to benefit other essential
3 workers throughout the government, including autonomous agencies such as the
4 Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation, as well as essential workers in the private
5 sector, who also risked their health and safety to provide critical services during the
6 pandemic; and

7 **WHEREAS**, putting money directly in the pockets of the individuals and
8 families who need it, and delivering extra pay to deserving essential workers in
9 other areas of the public and private sectors, will boost the buying power of more
10 Commonwealth residents, stimulate the local economy through the multiplier effect
11 for every dollar spent locally, help small businesses, and increase local collections
12 through revenue streams such as Business Gross Revenue Taxes, Northern
13 Marianas Territorial Income Taxes, and Excise Taxes;

14 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the House of
15 Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth
16 Legislature, the Senate concurring, that the Legislature hereby strongly encourages
17 and endorses the issuance of a new local economic impact payment, to be funded
18 by ARPA and within the guidelines issued by the U.S. Treasury, to provide direct
19 and expedited financial relief of \$500 per eligible adult, and \$500 per eligible
20 dependent, for households that meet adjusted gross income guidelines of up to
21 \$75,000 per individual or \$150,000 for married couples provided that those

1 individuals and married couples with income above said maximum amounts will
2 still be entitled to receive the economic impact payment less \$5.00 for every
3 \$100.00 above the cap; and

4 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Legislature strongly urges that
5 this new local economic impact payment shall be in the form of direct payments to
6 qualified households and not debit cards, in order to expedite the delivery of needed
7 aid, provide recipients with the flexibility and freedom to choose how they wish to
8 apply these funds, expand the pool of small businesses that will benefit from
9 increased consumer spending, and reduce overhead costs of administration; and

10 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Legislature hereby endorses and
11 approves the extension of premium pay “bonuses” to other essential workers
12 throughout the government, including autonomous agencies such as the
13 Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation, as well as essential workers in the private
14 sector, to the extent that such premium pay may be funded by ARPA, within the
15 law and the guidelines issued by the U.S. Treasury; and

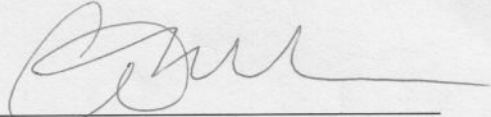
16 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Speaker of the House
17 Representatives and the President of the Senate shall certify and the House Clerk
18 and the Senate Legislative Secretary shall attest to the adoption of this joint
19 resolution and thereafter the House Clerk shall transmit a copy to Honorable Ralph
20 DLG. Torres, Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;
21 Honorable Arnold I. Palacios, Lieutenant Governor, Commonwealth of the

1 Northern Mariana Islands; Honorable Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan, Northern Marianas
2 Delegate, 117th United States Congress; Honorable Jude U. Hofschneider, Senate
3 President, Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature;
4 Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez, Speaker of the House of Representatives,
5 Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature; Honorable David
6 M. Apatang, Mayor of the Municipality of Saipan; Honorable Edwin P. Aldan,
7 Mayor of the Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan; Honorable Efraim M. Atalig,
8 Mayor of the Municipality of Rota; and Honorable Vicente C. Santos Jr., Mayor of
9 the Municipality of the Northern Islands.

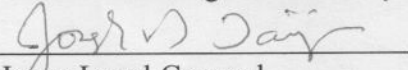
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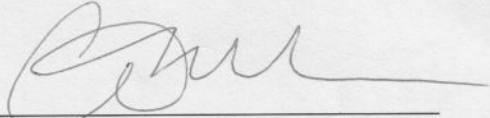
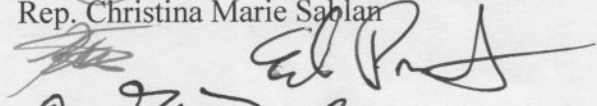

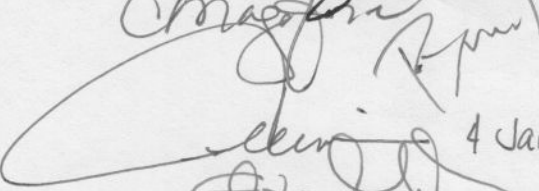
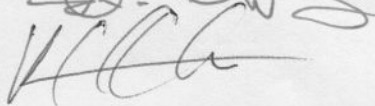
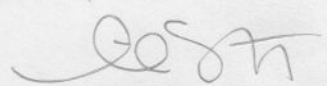
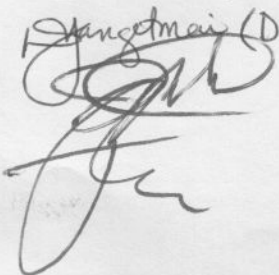
Date: 1/4/2022

Introduced by:


Rep. Christina Marie Sablan

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:


House Legal Counsel





4 Jan 22


Angelmar (Denky)

Richard T. Lizama