



# 19<sup>th</sup> CNMI YOUTH CONGRESS

*Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature*

P.O. BOX 500586 • SAIPAN, MP 96950

**Senator Ayden Sean C. Yumul**  
*Chairperson*  
*Committee on Education*

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 19-01**

**DATE: 07/11/2024**

**RE: Y.C.B. No. 19-01**

The Honorable Vinnie Juan Q. Sablan  
Speaker of the 19<sup>th</sup> CNMI Youth Congress  
Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Education to which was referred Y.C.B. No. 19-01 entitled:

“To require all public schools within the CNMI: elementary, middle and high schools to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages; and for other purposes.”,

begs leave to report as follows:

## **I. RECOMMENDATION:**

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that Y.C.B. No. 19-01 be passed by the Youth Congress in the form of Y.C.B. No. 19-01, Y.C.D.1.

## **II. ANALYSIS:**

### **A. Purpose:**

The purpose of this bill is to require the public schools from all grade levels in the Commonwealth to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro/Carolinian languages.

### **B. Committee Findings:**

Your Committee recognizes that there is a limited number of residents in the Commonwealth who fluently speak Chamorro/Carolinian, and use either of these

languages as a regular form of communication. Saving these indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the protection of the cultural dignity of our indigenous people, and to safeguard our traditional heritage. According to the CNMI 2020 census, only 29.3% of the entire population claimed they could speak Chamorro and only 5.7% claimed they could speak Carolinian.

Your Committee has also reviewed the CNMI's statistics which point out the lack of cultural enrichment and language comprehension within our islands. For example, a short survey among high school students in Tinian finds that just 18% of youth speak Chamorro or Carolinian at home or among friends and family.

Your Committee, along with honorary observers formally met on July 11, 2024 to formally discuss the proposed legislation. At the meeting, no member objected to the passage of the proposed legislation. They cited the need to preserve the native languages for future generations. They further find that within their school communities, there is an engrained desire within their peers to have a grasp of the languages of Chamorro and Carolinian, whether they be local or adopted members of their committees. Through informal dialogue with stakeholders, your Committee further finds that the intent of Y.C.B. NO. 19-01 is one supported by them, however through those discussions, suggestions were made to allow for easier enactment when referred legislation is signed into law. Therefore, it is for these reasons that your Committee strongly supports the provisions proposed in Y.C.B. NO. 19-01 and recommends its passage with amendments to give the Public School System the flexibility to determine the instructor requirements for the Chamorro and Carolinian teachers.

**C. Public Comments/Public Hearing:**

1. **Public Hearing.** No public hearing was scheduled for Y.C.B. NO. 19-01. However, a Committee Meeting, which was open to the public, was held on July 11, 2024.
2. **Committee Meeting.** The proposed legislation made its first appearance during the scheduled Committee Meeting convened on July 11, 2024. The Committee Meeting notices and agenda were officially posted on June 28, 2024 on various legislative forums and social media sites to invite members of the general public to provide comments as indicated under Item No. IV., Public Comments of the meeting agenda. However, no public comment was received on the proposed legislation by your Committee during the scheduled meeting.
3. **Written Comment.** Although written comments were not required at this time to address the intent of Y.C.B. NO. 19-01, your Committee sought out comments from the following entities and stakeholders:

- a. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) (*did not comment or turn in comments*)
- b. Executive Assistant for the Carolinian Affairs Office, under the Office of the Governor (CAO)
- c. The Secretary of the Department of Community & Cultural Affairs (DCCA) (*did not comment or turn in comments*)
- d. Commissioner of Education for the CNMI Public School System (PSS)
- e. The Resident Executive for the Indigenous Affairs Office, under the Office of the Governor

Comments and suggestions from those your Committee sought feedback from range from concerns of lack of available funding to satisfy the provisions of the bill should it become law, suggesting to include language requiring the PSS to develop a structured curriculum, and worries that the bill, should it be enacted may take a long time to fully comply with. However, those entities and stakeholders that your Committee reached out to verbally commented on the legislation and supported the bill's intent.

D. Legislative History:

Y.C.B. No. 19-01 was formally introduced by Senator Ayden Sean Yumul on August 19, 2023 and was subsequently referred to the Committee on Education

E. Cost Benefit:

Although the enactment of Y.C.B. No. 19-01 will result in additional costs to the PSS to hire qualified Chamorro and Carolinian teachers, your Committee stands in agreement that the preservation of our indigenous languages is something that justifies the costs that may be incurred.

F. Summary of Committee Amendments:

To amend Section 3 on Pg. 2, lines 17-19 to read as follows:

1. Line 15

15 ~~in such a way that no classes can be offered in the 2024-25 school year.~~ in such a way that no classes can be offered in an operational school year.


2. Line 17-19

17 can begin immediately. ~~Chamorro and Carolinian teachers or instructors~~  
18 ~~shall not be required to pass the Praxis exams or other similarly required~~  
19 ~~exams for standard teachers.~~

**III. CONCLUSION:**

The Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of Y.C.B. No. 19-01, and recommends its passage with amendments in the form of Y.C.D. 1 on First and Final Reading.

Respectfully submitted,



Sen. Ayden Sean C. Yumul  
Chairperson



Sen. Peaches Fiona G. Bayot  
Vice Chairperson



Sen. Aden Chonne H. Calvo  
Member




Sen. Maili Hareyo'I B. Peter  
Member



Sen. Soledad Maria T. Sablan  
Member

Reviewed by:



Legal Counsel

**NINETEENTH COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN  
MARIANA ISLANDS YOUTH CONGRESS**

**3RD REGULAR SESSION, 2023**

**Y.C.B. No. 19-01, Y.C.D.1**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To require all public schools within the CNMI: elementary, middle and high schools to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages; and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE NINETEENTH COMMONWEALTH OF THE  
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS YOUTH CONGRESS:**

1           **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be known as “The CNMI  
2 Indigenous Language Preservation Act of 2023.”

3           **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Youth Congress recognizes that  
4 there is a limited number of residents in the CNMI who fluently speak  
5 Chamorro/Carolinian and use either of these languages as an ordinary form of  
6 communication. Saving these indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the  
7 protection of the cultural dignity of our indigenous people, and safeguard our  
8 traditional heritage. According to the CNMI 2020 census, only 29.3% of the  
9 entire population claimed they could speak Chamorro and only 5.7% claimed they  
10 could speak Carolinian.

11           The CNMI’s statistics point out the lack of cultural enrichment and  
12 language comprehension within our islands. A short survey among high school

1 students in Tinian finds that just 18% of youth speak Chamorro or Carolinian at  
2 home or among friends and family.

3 **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision  
4 Commission, the following provision shall hereby be enacted:

5 “§101. Chamorro & Carolinian Language Requirements

6 (a) One full year of Chamorro or Carolinian will be required for high school  
7 students to graduate, and middle school students to be promoted. The  
8 Public School System (PSS) shall offer at least 2 years of Chamorro or  
9 Carolinian language classes for those students who wish to continue  
10 instruction after the first year.

11 ~~(b)~~ PSS shall be required to hire individuals who are qualified to be teaching  
12 either language at the level in which they are assigned. This qualification  
13 should be set in a manner to immediately implement Chamorro and  
14 Carolinian languages in schools. PSS should not set instructor requirement  
15 ~~in such a way that no classes can be offered in the 2024-25 school year in~~  
16 such a way that no classes can be offered in an operational school year.  
17 PSS shall set such instructor or teacher qualifications in such a way that  
18 classes can begin immediately. ~~Chamorro and Carolinian teachers or~~  
19 ~~instructors shall not be required to pass the Praxis exams or other similarly~~  
20 ~~required exams for standard teachers.~~

1 (c) Chamorro and Carolinian classes shall be counted as the foreign language  
2 credit that is required as a prerequisite for high school students. PSS shall  
3 implement Chamorro and Carolinian language classes within their  
4 curriculum by School Year 2024-25.”

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

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

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

Prefiled: 08/09/23

Date: 08/19/23

Introduced by: /s/Senator Ayden Sean C. Yumul

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/Antonette R. Villagomez  
Legal Counsel