



David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 19, 2026

GOV2026-182

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

The Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President
The Senate; Twenty-Fourth Northern
Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **House Bill No. 24-24, HD1, SD2** entitled, "To enact 4 CMC § 1208 and 4 CMC § 1313 to establish a Legal Services and Access to Justice Tax Credit.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 24-28**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission;
Public Auditor; Micronesian Legal Services; Division of Revenue & Taxation;
Special Assistant for Administration; Programs and Legislative Review



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE**

Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950
cnmileg.net

February 11, 2026

The Honorable David M. Apatang
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

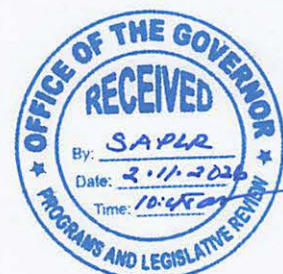
Dear Governor Apatang:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action **H. B. No. 24-24, HD1, SD2**, entitled, "To enact 4 CMC § 1208 and 4 CMC § 1313 to establish a Legal Services and Access to Justice Tax Credit.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely yours,


Linda B. Muña, MPA
House Clerk

Attachment





**TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANA COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

APRIL 24, 2025

REPRESENTATIVE MARISSA R. FLORES OF SAIPAN, PRECINCT 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao, Diego V. F. Camacho, and Edmund S. Villagomez) in an open and public meeting with an opportunity for the public to comment, introduced the following Bill:

H. B. No. 24-24, HD1, SD2

AN ACT

**TO ENACT 4 CMC § 1208 AND 4 CMC § 1313 TO
ESTABLISH A LEGAL SERVICES AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE
TAX CREDIT.**

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Bill was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, which submitted Standing Committee Report 24-15; adopted 7/31/2025.

**THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON
FIRST AND FINAL READING, JULY 31, 2025;**

with amendments in the form of H. B. No. 24-24, HD1 and transmitted to **THE SENATE.**

IN THE SENATE

The Bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs, which submitted Standing Committee Report 24-57; adopted 2/4/2026.

THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE SENATE ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, FEBRUARY 4, 2026;

with amendments in the form of H. B. No. 24-24, HD1, SD2 and returned to **THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

The House of Representatives accepted the Senate amendments and passed H. B. No. 24-24, HD1, SD2 during its 2ND Day, 3RD Regular Session on February 9, 2026.

**H. B. No. 24- 24, HD1, SD2 IS DULY PASSED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE.**



Linda B. Muña, House Clerk



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

SECOND DAY, THIRD REGULAR SESSION

FEBRUARY 9, 2026

H. B. No. 24-24, HD1, SD2

AN ACT

TO ENACT 4 CMC § 1208 AND 4 CMC § 1313 TO ESTABLISH A
LEGAL SERVICES AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE TAX
CREDIT.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN
MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

2 The Legislature finds that the Commonwealth currently offers a tax credit
3 incentive program for private and corporate contributions to qualified educational
4 institutions. These Education Tax Credit statutes, codified under 4 CMC §§ 1205
5 and 1306, have successfully encouraged support for public schools and nonprofit
6 educational organizations. These statutes demonstrate that well-structured tax
7 incentives can help bridge funding gaps and advance important public policy
8 goals without requiring direct appropriations from the General Fund.

HOUSE BILL 24-24, HD1, SD2

1 The Legislature also finds that there is a critical and growing unmet need
2 in regards to access to civil legal services for low-income and underserved
3 residents of the Commonwealth. Every year, thousands of individuals and
4 families in the CNMI face legal issues involving housing, family relationships,
5 immigration, public benefits, consumer rights, and personal safety. Moreover,
6 many of these individuals cannot afford to hire legal counsel and are left to
7 navigate complex legal systems on their own, often resulting in denied rights,
8 unresolved disputes, and deepened economic and social hardship.

9 The Micronesian Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3)
10 organization that provides free civil legal assistance in the CNMI. MLSC's
11 services cover a wide range of civil matters, including family law, housing,
12 consumer protection, employment rights, immigration, public benefits, and
13 victims' rights. All MLSC services are provided at no cost to individuals with
14 incomes at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. This eligibility
15 encompasses approximately 38% of the CNMI population, which is about 19,500
16 individuals.

17 Despite the clear public need for these services, MLSC's capacity is severely
18 limited. MLSC's Marianas Office operates with only three attorneys and three
19 paralegals, making it impossible to fully meet the needs of the eligible population.
20 While MLSC receives some federal funding and has occasionally been awarded
21 supplemental funds through local appropriations, these sources are inconsistent
22 and insufficient. As a result, the gap between the demand for free civil legal

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1 services and MLSC's capacity continues to leave many residents without
2 meaningful access to justice.

3 The Legislature finds that access to competent, free or low-cost legal services
4 is essential to individual stability, community resilience, and the fair
5 administration of justice. Just as the Education Tax Credit empowers the public
6 to support educational institutions through designated tax contributions, the
7 CNMI ought to establish a similar mechanism to encourage private support for
8 nonprofit legal services organizations. A targeted tax credit for contributions to
9 qualified nonprofit legal services organizations would enable individuals and
10 businesses to help expand access to justice for indigent and underserved members
11 of the community.

12 Accordingly, the purpose of this legislation is to enact 4 CMC § 1208 and
13 4 CMC § 1313 for the purpose of establishing a Legal Services and Access to
14 Justice Tax Credit. This new credit is modeled on the Education Tax Credit but
15 applies specifically to qualifying nonprofit legal services organizations operating
16 in the Commonwealth. The credit will incentivize individuals and businesses to
17 direct a portion of their Wage and Salary, Earnings, and Gross Revenue Tax
18 liability to nonprofit legal services organizations, such as MLSC. By establishing
19 this credit, the Commonwealth creates a locally driven mechanism for public
20 investment in nonprofit legal services organizations that directly addresses the
21 existing gap in access to justice.

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1 **SECTION 2. ENACTMENT.**

2 Section 1208 of Chapter 2, Division 1, Title 4 of the Commonwealth Code is
3 hereby enacted to read as follows:

4 **“§ 1208. Legal Services and Access to Justice Tax Credit.**

5 (a) A person may take cash contributions made during the tax year to
6 qualifying nonprofit legal services organizations as a nonrefundable credit
7 against the tax imposed by 4 CMC § 1201 and 4 CMC § 1202 to the extent
8 provided by this Section. No such credit shall be allowed for any amount
9 deducted in determining taxable income under the NMTIT as shown on the
10 taxpayer’s return. The “tax imposed on wages and salaries or earnings” for
11 purposes of computing the credit under 4 CMC § 1206 is the tax net of any
12 credit taken pursuant to this Section.

13 (b) The maximum credit available in any one year under this Section
14 and 4 CMC § 1313 combined shall be the lesser of the sum of the taxes
15 imposed under 4 CMC §§ 1201–02 and 4 CMC §§ 1301–04, or \$5,000.
16 Provided that a qualifying entity shall not receive more than \$200,000 tax
17 credit within a tax year.

18 (c) The term “qualifying nonprofit legal services organization” under
19 this section means nonprofit corporations that:

- 20 (1) Have been issued a Letter of Determination granting tax-
21 exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
22 and

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1 (2) Operates within the Commonwealth with a primary purpose
2 of providing free or low-cost legal assistance to low-income or
3 underserved individuals.

4 (d) To obtain the credit, the taxpayer must furnish the following to the
5 Division of Revenue and Taxation:

6 (1) A properly documented receipt issued by the recipient
7 institution which must include, at a minimum, the name and tax
8 identification number of the institution, the taxpayer's name and tax
9 identification number, the date of payment and the amount paid, and
10 the purpose of the donation; and

11 (2) A copy of the Letter of Determination with respect to the tax-
12 exempt status of the recipient institution.

13 (e) Funds received by qualifying nonprofit legal services organizations
14 pursuant to this Section shall be expended solely for the purpose of providing
15 free or low-cost legal assistance to low-income or underserved individuals
16 within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The recipient
17 organization shall certify compliance with this requirement in a form and
18 manner prescribed by the Division of Revenue and Taxation.”

HOUSE BILL 24-24, HD1, SD2

1 **SECTION 3. ENACTMENT.**

2 Section 1313 of Chapter 3, Division 1, Title 4 of the Commonwealth Code is
3 hereby enacted to read as follows:

4 **“§ 1313. Legal Services and Access to Justice Tax Credit.**

5 (a) A person may take cash contributions made during the tax year to
6 qualifying nonprofit legal services organizations as a nonrefundable credit
7 against the tax imposed by 4 CMC §§ 1301, 1302, 1303, and 1304 to the
8 extent provided by this Section. No such credit shall be allowed for any
9 amount deducted in determining taxable income under the NMTIT as shown
10 on the taxpayer's return. The “tax imposed” for purposes of computing the
11 credit under 4 CMC § 1308 is the tax net of any credit taken pursuant to this
12 Section.

13 (b) The maximum credit available in any one year under this Section
14 and 4 CMC § 1208 combined shall be the lesser of the sum of the taxes
15 imposed under 4 CMC §§ 1201–02 and 4 CMC §§ 1301–04, or \$ 5,000.
16 Provided that a qualifying entity shall not receive more than \$200,000 tax
17 credit within a tax year.

18 (c) The term “qualifying nonprofit legal services organizations” under
19 this Section has the same meaning as in 4 CMC § 1208(c).

20 (d) To obtain the credit, the taxpayer must furnish to the Division of
21 Revenue and Taxation the information prescribed in 4 CMC § 1208(d).

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1 (e) Funds received by qualifying nonprofit legal services organizations
2 pursuant to this Section shall be expended solely for the purpose of providing
3 free or low-cost legal assistance to low-income or underserved individuals
4 within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The recipient
5 organization shall certify compliance with this requirement in a form and
6 manner prescribed by the Division of Revenue and Taxation.

7 (f) The qualifying recipient organization shall provide a report of the
8 expenditure of the funds received to the presiding officers of the legislature
9 within thirty (30) days after the end of each tax year.”

10 **SECTION 4. SEVERABILITY.**

11 If any provisions of this Act or the application of any such provision to any
12 person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent
13 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to
14 persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be
15 affected thereby.

16 **SECTION 5. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

17 This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as
18 affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes
19 repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes.
20 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under
21 or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of

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1 terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall
2 already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

3 **SECTION 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

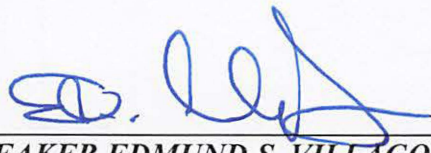
4 This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor, or it becoming
5 law without such approval.

Attested to by:




Linda B. Muña, House Clerk

Certified by:



SPEAKER EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ
House of Representatives
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

Approved this *19th* day of *March*, 2026



DAVID M. APATANG
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands