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

The Honorable Jude U. Hofschneider  
Senate President, The Senate  
Twenty-Second 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. 22-2, SD1, entitled, "To amend the Commonwealth Code to authorize civil claims for child sexual abuse to be commenced at any time; and for other purposes.,” which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes Public Law No. 22-12. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

RALPH D. TORRES  
Governor

cc: Press Secretary; Chief of Staff; Senior Policy Advisor; Attorney General’s Office; CNMI Superior Court; CNMI Supreme Court; Law Revision Commission; Public Auditor; Special Assistant for Administration; Special Assistant for Programs and Legislative Review
October 6, 2021

The Honorable Ralph DLG. Torres
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Torres:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action **H. B. No. 22-2, SD1**, entitled: "To amend the Commonwealth Code to authorize civil claims for child sexual abuse to be commenced at any time; and for other purposes.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely yours,

Linda B. Muña
House Clerk

Attachment
Representative JOSEPH LEE PAN T. GUERRERO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (for himself; Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Vicente C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Richard T. Lizama, Edwin K. Propst, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) in an open and public meeting with an opportunity for the public to comment, introduced the following Bill:

H. B. No. 22-2, SD1

AN ACT

TO AMEND THE COMMONWEALTH CODE TO AUTHORIZE CIVIL CLAIMS FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TO BE COMMENCED AT ANY TIME; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Bill was referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations, which submitted Standing Committee Report 22-5; adopted 5/28/2021.

THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, MAY 28, 2021; without amendments and transmitted to the Senate.

The Bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Government, Law and Federal Relations, which submitted Standing Committee Report 22-47; adopted 9/14/2021.

THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE SENATE ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021; with amendments in the form of H. B. No. 22-2, SD1.

H. B. No. 22-2, SD1 was return

The House of Representatives accepted the Senate amendments and passed H. B. No. 22-2, SD1, during its 4th Day, Second Regular Session on October 1, 2021.

THE BILL WAS FINALLY PASSED ON OCTOBER 1, 2021.

Linda B. Muña, House Clerk
AN ACT

TO AMEND THE COMMONWEALTH CODE TO AUTHORIZE CIVIL CLAIMS FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TO BE COMMENCED AT ANY TIME; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

The Legislature finds that sexual crimes committed against persons under the age of eighteen (18) are very sensitive cases that can severely traumatize young victims. Often times, these incidents are left unreported due to the victim’s fear of revealing such disturbing information, threats made by the abuser, or familial connections of the abuser.

The Legislature finds that for many child victims, the trauma itself prevents them from coming forward earlier. As adults, victims may not connect the assault to its long-lasting impact until they seek therapeutic help years later, often referred to as delayed discovery.
Delayed discovery is a result of emotional or psychological trauma that is often accompanied with repression in a person’s memory that the abuse actually took place, in which the psychological injuries are not realized until adulthood after undergoing counseling or therapy. Many of the injuries associated with childhood sexual abuse do not manifest themselves until much later in life.

The Legislature further finds that criminal prosecution is not barred by a statute of limitation and prosecution may be pursued at any time for a case in which an adult discovers that he or she was a victim of sexual abuse as a child under the age of eighteen. The criminal prosecution option remains open regardless of the passage of time pursuant to 6 CMC § 107(a).

However, the same option is not available for civil cases involving sexual abuse of victims that occurred when they were under 18 years of age; however, such victims realized or discovered the sexual abuse during their adulthood after more than 6 six years have elapsed. This type of case, if pursued through civil litigation, is barred by the current six-years statute of limitation under 7 CMC § 2505.

The Legislature finds that the expiration of the applicable statute of limitations for child sexual abuse victims during this period resulted in barring many meritorious civil claims. This has allowed many child sexual abusers to escape civil liability. If evidence is sufficient to prove civil liability, the mere passage of time should not prevent child sexual abuse victims from seeking justice.

Furthermore, eliminating the time limitation for civil actions involving sexual abuse of minors will prove to be beneficial for it will give the victims, regardless of age and duration since the alleged incident, the opportunity to build their confidence and report such incidents.
knowing that they can begin at any time regardless of the time duration since the victim reached the age of eighteen (18) and still be made whole. Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to amend Title 7 of the Commonwealth Code to add a new section to authorize civil claims for child sexual abuse to be commenced at any time.

**SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.**

Title 7, Division 2, Chapter 5 of the Commonwealth Code is amended by adding a new section 2515 to read as follows:

“§ 2515. No Limit for Child Sexual Abuse.

(a) Any claim arising from an incident of child sexual abuse may be commenced against a person, a legal entity, abusers, their enablers, their aiders or abettors, those acting in concert with them and their institutions at any time.

(b) Any claim arising from an incident of child sexual abuse that occurred in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands which has been barred by virtue of the expiration of the previous civil statute of limitations shall be permitted to be filed in any court of competent jurisdiction.”

**SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY.**

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

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

Attested to by:  
Linda B. Muña, House Clerk

Certified by:  
SPEAKER EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ  
House of Representatives  
22nd Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

Approved this 10th day of November, 2021

Ralph DLG. Torres  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands