

David M. Apatang
Governor



Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 20, 2026

GOV 2026-189


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

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

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that, as a result of votes to override my veto by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature during their Fourth Day, Third Regular Session on February 26, 2026, and Fourth Day, Third Regular Session on March 18, 2026, respectively, **Senate Bill No. 24-04**, entitled "To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI," becomes **Public Law No. 24-29**. Copies of this law are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission; Chairperson, Board of Education; Commissioner, Public School System; President, Northern Marianas College; Resident Executive for Indigenous Affairs; Executive Assistant, CAO; Speaker, CNMI Youth Congress; Special Assistant for Administration; Programs and Legislative Review



THE SENATE
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P. O. Box 500129
Saipan, MP 96950

March 19, 2026

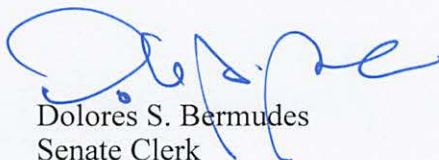
The Honorable David M. Apatang
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Capital Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Apatang:

This is to inform you that the 24th Senate repassed Senate Bill No. 24-04, entitled, "To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI," by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members in each house in the Senate on February 26, 2026 and in the House of Representatives on March 18, 2026.

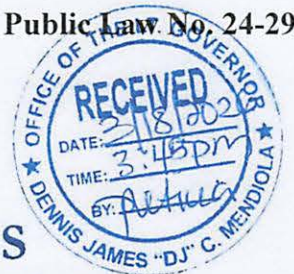
Senate Bill No. 24-04 is now law. Please inform us of the Public Law number assigned to this Act.

Sincerely yours,


Dolores S. Bermudes
Senate Clerk

Attachment





HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE

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

March 18, 2026


HOUSE
FILE

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

Dear Governor Apatang:

This is to inform you that the House of Representatives in its Fourth Day, Third Regular Session on March 18, 2026, overrode your veto of S. B. NO. 24-04, entitled, "To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.", with the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the House of Representatives.

Sincerely yours,


Linda B. Muña, MPA
House Clerk
Attachment



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE

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

March 18, 2026

HOUSE
FILE

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

Dear Senate President King-Nabors:

This is to inform you that the House of Representatives in its Fourth Day, Third Regular Session on March 18, 2026, overrode the Governor's veto of S. B. NO. 24-04, entitled, "To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.", with the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the House of Representatives.

Sincerely yours,


Linda B. Muña, MPA
House Clerk

Attachment

TRANSMITTAL TO THE SENATE

Received by:  _____

Date: 3/18/26

Time: 3:36 PM



David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

January 21, 2026

GOV 2026-032

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

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

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have vetoed **Senate Bill No. 24-04**, entitled “To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI,” which was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

I strongly support the objective of this bill to provide for robust education in our community’s indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian languages, to provide support for teacher training, and to facilitate traditional cultural preservation and transmission.

I likewise support and applaud the Nineteenth CNMI Youth Congress for their participation in the political process and for their thoughtful advocacy for the issues and policies that are important to them.

However, the Attorney General has advised that this bill conflicts with the constitutional requirement of Article XV, section 1(b) that “[t]he board of education shall formulate policy and exercise control over the public school system through the superintendent.” A similar bill in the Nineteenth Legislature was shelved for the same reason. I must therefore regrettably veto this bill.

Nonetheless, I encourage the Board of Education and the Public School System to consider voluntarily implementing similar robust support for Chamorro and Carolinian language education, consistent with Article XV, section 1(a)’s injunction that “[t]he educational system shall recognize

consistent with Article XV, section 1(a)'s injunction that "[t]he educational system shall recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage and indigenous way of life of the people and shall be committed to provide for the language needs of the people and the preservation of their cultural integrity within a global community."

I respectfully exercise my constitutional authority to veto this Bill.

Sincerely,



DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission; Chairperson, Board of Education; Commissioner, Public School System; President, Northern Marianas College; Resident Executive for Indigenous Affairs; Executive Assistant for Carolinian Affairs; Speaker, CNMI Youth Congress



THE SENATE
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P. O. Box 500129
Saipan, MP 96950

December 30, 2025

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

Dear Governor Apatang:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith **Senate Bill No. 24-04**, entitled, "To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI," which was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the 24th Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Legislature.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dolores S. Bermudes".

Dolores S. Bermudes
Senate Clerk

Attachment





**THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE**

SENATE BILL NO. 24-04

AN ACT

To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.

SENATE ACTION

Offered by Senator(s): Manny Gregory Tenorio Castro

Date: January 22, 2025

Referred to: Committee on Health, Welfare and Programs

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-08 adopted on 06/23/25

Final Reading: June 23, 2025

The SENATE overrode the Governor's veto (Gov. Msg. No. 24-210) on February 26, 2026.

HOUSE ACTION

Referred to: Committee on Education

Standing Committee Report No.:

Final Reading: December 22, 2025

The HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES overrode the Governor's veto on March 18, 2026.


SENATOR JUDE V. HOFSCHEIDER
ACTING SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY



THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2025 **S.B. NO. 24-04**

AN ACT

To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in
the CNMI.

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

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act may be cited as the “Chamorro and Carolinian
2 Language Education Act of 2025.”

3 **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that Article 15, Section 1(a)
4 of the CNMI Constitution makes it clear that the educational system shall recognize the
5 distinct and unique cultural heritage and indigenous way of life of the people and shall be
6 committed to providing for the language needs of the people and the preservation of their
7 cultural integrity within a global community.

8 On August 17, 2024, the Nineteenth CNMI Youth Congress adopted Youth Congress
9 Bill No. 19-01, YCD 1, “To require all public schools within the CNMI: elementary, middle
10 and high schools to teach at least one full year of the Chamorro and/or Carolinian languages.”
11 In their findings, the Youth Congress acknowledged that there is a limited number of residents
12 in the CNMI who fluently speak Chamorro and/or Carolinian. Further, the Youth Congress
13 found that “[s]aving these indigenous languages is crucial to ensure the protection of the
14 cultural dignity of our indigenous people, and safeguard our traditional heritage.”

15 The Legislature further recognizes that despite the CNMI Public School System’s
16 (PSS) constitutional mandate to support Chamorro and Carolinian bilingual programs,
17 resources allocated to bilingual teacher compensation, instructional contact hours, and
18 instructional materials remain inequitable. Some bilingual teachers make as little as \$19,000

SENATE BILL NO. 24-04

1 per year and are treated as teaching assistants despite performing the work of a full-time
2 teacher, like planning lessons, developing curriculum, and leading classrooms. Therefore, it is
3 the purpose of this Act to address issues relating to the CNMI Public School System's
4 Chamorro & Carolinian language requirements; school personnel; and salary parity for people
5 who hold Chamorro and/or Carolinian bilingual language and culture certificates.

6 **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision
7 Commission, the following provisions are enacted:

8 **“§ 101. Chamorro & Carolinian Language Requirements.**

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

13 (b) PSS shall hire individuals who are qualified to **teach** either language at the level in
14 which they are assigned. In addition to other PSS teacher qualification requirements, in order
15 to be qualified to teach a Chamorro or Carolinian language class at PSS, the individual must
16 hold a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture Certificate as provided in § 102.

17 (c) Chamorro and Carolinian language **classes** shall be counted as a foreign language
18 credit as a prerequisite for graduation from high school. PSS shall implement Chamorro and
19 Carolinian language classes within their curriculum by School Year 2025-26.

20 **§ 102. Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture Certificates.**

21 (a) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Northern Marianas
22 College, shall develop a 16-week academic program specifically designed for Chamorro
23 and/or Carolinian bilingual language and culture teachers to introduce the fundamental
24 theories and practices of teaching and learning, educational psychology, inclusive practices
25 for students with learning needs, instructional strategies, and classroom management, along
26 with a comprehensive examination of the rationale and methods for curriculum planning,
27 including integrating curriculum content through the use of thematic approaches.

28 (b) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Chamorro-Carolinian
29 Language Policy Commission, Carolinian Affairs Office, and the Indigenous Affairs Office,

SENATE BILL NO. 24-04

1 shall develop proficiency tests designed to assess the fluency of an individual's Chamorro
2 and/or Carolinian language skills and their knowledge of cultural and traditional practices.

3 (c) Upon successful completion of the program described in subsection (a) along with
4 passing the Chamorro and/or Carolinian proficiency tests described in subsection (b), the State
5 Board of Education shall issue the successful individual a Chamorro and/or Carolinian
6 Language and Culture Certificate. Holding a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and
7 Culture Certificate indicates that the person is proficient in the Chamorro and/or Carolinian
8 language and culture and has met the requirements stated in § 101(b) to teach Chamorro
9 and/or Carolinian language classes at PSS. A baccalaureate degree is not required for a person
10 to be issued a Chamorro and/or Carolinian Language and Culture Certificate.

11 **§ 103. Annual Salary for Chamorro & Carolinian Teachers.**

12 Any person who receives a Chamorro and/or Carolinian language and culture certificate
13 in accordance with § 101 shall receive a minimum annual salary equivalent to Pay Level VI,
14 Step 03 in accordance with NMIAC § 60-30.2-215 (Alignment with PSS Classification and
15 Salary Schedule).”

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

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

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

SENATE BILL NO. 24-04

CERTIFIED BY:



KARL R. KING-NABORS
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ATTESTED BY:



FRANCISCO Q. CRUZ
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY

Disapproved this 21st day of January, 2026



DAVID M. APATANG
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

SENATE BILL NO. 24-04

CERTIFICATION:

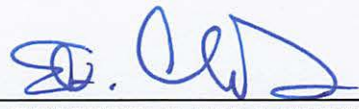
OVERRIDDEN BY THE SENATE ON FEBRUARY 26, 2026, AND BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON MARCH 18, 2026, BY THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF TWO-THIRDS OF THE MEMBERS IN EACH HOUSE.



KARL R. KING-NABORS
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

3/19/26

DATE



EDMUND S. VILLGOMEZ
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

3/19/26

DATE

Became Public Law No. 24-29 on 20th day of MARCH, 2026.