



David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOV2026-235

April 10, 2026

The Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President
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 signed into law **Senate Bill No. 24-19**, entitled "To amend 9 CMC § 2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands," which was passed by the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

I applaud the intent of the bill to provide a pathway for persons without current lawful status in the CNMI to obtain a driver's license, rather than operating a vehicle without a license and forgoing payment of the license fee to the government.

However, I wish to note concerns with the legislation which were flagged by the Office of the Attorney General in the attached opinion and to encourage the Legislature to consider amending the legislation accordingly.

Namely, the numbering for subsections (9) and (10) to section (d) appears to be in error; the requirements for passage of written and driving tests and restricting travel and access to any federal building appear to be intended to apply to the exception enumerated within subsection (8).

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 24-31**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,



DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission;
Department of Public Safety; Bureau of Motor Vehicle; Public Auditor;
Special Assistant for Administration; Programs and Legislative Review



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

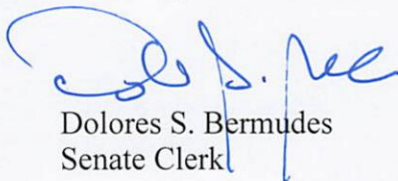
March 31, 2026

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. 24-19**, entitled, "To amend 9 CMC § 2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands," which was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the 24th Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely,



Dolores S. Bermudes
Senate Clerk

Attachment





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

SENATE BILL NO. 24-19

AN ACT

To amend 9 CMC § 2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

SENATE ACTION

Offered by Senator(s): Donald M. Manglona

Date: February 11, 2025

Referred to: Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-16 adopted on 07/15/2025

Final Reading: July 15, 2025

HOUSE ACTION

Referred to: Committee on Ways and Means

Standing Committee Report No.: 24-47 adopted on 03/18/2026

Final Reading: March 18, 2026

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Francisco Q. Cruz", written over a horizontal line.

**SENATOR FRANCISCO Q. CRUZ
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY**



THE SENATE
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2025 S.B. NO. 24-19

AN ACT

To amend 9 CMC § 2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature acknowledges that the issuance of
2 a driver’s license under 9 CMC § 2208(d)(5) requires the applicant to submit proof of U.S.
3 citizenship or U.S. national, alien lawfully admitted for permanent or temporary residence in
4 the United States; conditional permanent resident status; an approved asylum application or
5 has entered into the United States in refugee status; has a valid, unexpired nonimmigrant visa
6 or nonimmigrant visa status; has a pending application for asylum in the United States; has a
7 pending or approved application for temporary protected status in the United States; has
8 approved deferred action status; or has a pending application for adjustment of status to that of
9 an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States or conditional
10 permanent resident status in the United States.

11 The Legislature finds that a person without legal status in the CNMI cannot obtain a
12 driver’s license to operate a motor vehicle. The Legislature also finds that individuals not
13 licensed to operate motor vehicles have limited transportation means to get to and from their
14 jobs, dental and medical appointments, school, and other necessary destinations. Therefore,
15 these individuals take chances and operate a motor vehicle without a driver’s license, have no
16 vehicle insurance, and don’t pay the driver’s license fee.

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1 The purpose of this Act is to allow all CNMI residents to obtain proper motor vehicle
2 licensure.

3 **Section 2. Amendment.** 9 CMC § 2208 is hereby amended to read:

4 “§2208. Issuance of Licenses and Identification Cards.

5 (a)-(c) [Unchanged.]

6 (d) Minimum issuance standards. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles shall require, at a
7 minimum, presentation and verification of the following information before issuing a card to a
8 person:

9 (1) A photo identity document, except that a non-photo identity document is
10 acceptable if it includes both the person’s full legal name and date of birth.

11 (2) Documentation showing the person’s date of birth.

12 (3) Proof of the person’s social security account number or verification that the
13 person is not eligible for a social security account number.

14 (4) Documentation showing the person’s name and address of ~~principle~~
15 principal residence.

16 (5) Except as provided in paragraph (8) of this subsection, Documentation
17 documentation showing that the person:

18 (i) is a citizen or national of the United States;

19 (ii) is an alien lawfully admitted for permanent or temporary residence
20 in the United States;

21 (iii) has conditional permanent resident status in the United States;

22 (iv) has an approved application for asylum in the United States or has
23 entered into the United States in refugee status;

24 (v) has a valid, unexpired nonimmigrant visa or nonimmigrant visa
25 status for entry into the United States;

26 (vi) has a pending application for asylum in the United States;

27 (vii) has a pending or approved application for temporary protected
28 status in the United States;

29 (viii) has approved deferred action status; or

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1 (ix) has a pending application for adjustment of status to that of an alien
2 lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States or conditional
3 permanent resident status in the United States.

4 (6) Declaration required. Each applicant must sign a declaration under penalty
5 of perjury that the information presented on the application is true and correct, and the
6 Bureau of Motor Vehicles must retain the declaration. An applicant must sign a new
7 declaration when presenting new source documents to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles
8 on subsequent visits.

9 (7) Regulations. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles shall promulgate regulations
10 describing the documents that it will accept for verification of the data required by this
11 subsection.

12 (8) Exception process. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles may issue ~~regulations~~
13 ~~that provide an exception process for persons who, for reasons beyond their own~~
14 ~~control, are unable to present the necessary documents and must rely on alternate~~
15 ~~documents to establish identity or date of birth.~~ the following:

16 (A) A learner's permit under 9 CMC § 2206 to a person who is not able
17 to provide any of the required documentation under subparagraph (5) of this
18 subsection. Provided that the applicant shall provide any other form of
19 identification.

20 (B) A driver's license, not a Real ID driver's license, to a person who
21 is not able to provide the documentation required under subparagraph (5) of
22 this subsection. Provided that the applicant shall provide any other form of
23 identification. And provided further that the driver's license under this
24 provision shall be for one year and a fee of \$50.00, renewable each year upon
25 the payment of the annual fee of \$50.00.

26 (9) Successfully pass the required written and driving tests.

27 (10) The driver's license provided under this subsection shall not be used for
28 travel or access to any federal building.

29 (e)-(h) [Unchanged.]”

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1 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such
2 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent
3 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or
4 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

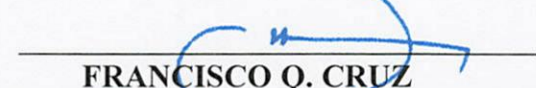
5 **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be
6 construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes
7 repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers
8 contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law.
9 The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying,
10 any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act
11 becomes effective.

12 **Section 5. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the
13 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

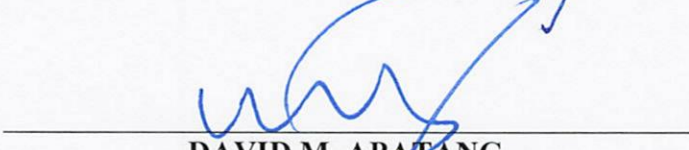
CERTIFIED BY:

ATTESTED BY:


KARL R. KING-NABORS
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE


FRANCISCO Q. CRUZ
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY

Approved this *10th* day of *April*, 2026


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Attorney General

2nd Floor Hon. Juan A. Sablan Memorial Bldg.
Caller Box 10007, Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

EDWARD MANIBUSAN
Attorney General

Review of Pending Legislation¹

April 7, 2026

OAGGOV: 2026-034
LSR No. 26-210

Hon. David M. Apatang
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Caller Box 10007
Saipan, MP 96950

Re: Senate Bill No. 24-19, entitled: "To amend 9 CMC § 2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

Dear Governor Apatang:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on Senate Bill No. 24-19, which is pending for your action.

I have read and reviewed the above-stated legislation and advise as follows:

The Bill MAY BE SIGNED – no legal deficiency

FURTHER CONSIDERATION IS ADVISED

The Bill SHOULD NOT BE SIGNED

S.B. 24-19:

The bill covers a subject appropriate for legislative enactment (driving privileges). The bill contains typos with the numbering which can be corrected by the Law Revision Commission.² The bill allows all residents, even those without legal status to be present within the CNMI, to obtain a temporary driver's license. Other states have similar bills that allow for driving privileges to non-status residents, but does not allow for travel or access to federal buildings.

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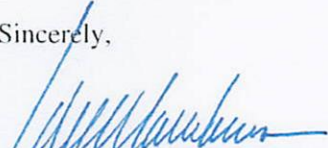
² For instance, in the exception section, there is a number (9) and (10) which seem to be intended to be included under subsection (8) as part of the requirements for exceptions—to pass the written and driving test and that the DL provided cannot be used for travel or access to federal buildings. Subsections (9) and (10) should be subsections (C) and (D) under (8).

The bill may be signed; however, upon signature, you should direct the Department of Public Safety Bureau of Motor Vehicles to ensure that the designed license differs from the current slate of licenses and contains the words "Not Valid for Federal Purposes."

Conclusion

The Bill may be signed, but the law revision commission should correct the typos in the numbering of the bill or should direct the legislature to correct the bill and the BMV should ensure a new design with the words "Not Valid for Federal Purposes" clearly placed on the card.

Sincerely,



EDWARD MANIBUSAN
Attorney General