



MATUA
Council for Native Chamorro Advancement
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December 28, 2022

Honorable Jude U. Hofschneider
President
Twenty-Second Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Re: TESTIMONY in Opposition to House Bill 22-82, offered by Speaker Edmond S. Villagomez

Håfa Adai President Hofschneider and Honorable Members:

On behalf of Matua Council for Native Chamorro Advancement, we hereby submit our opposition to House Local Bill 22-82:

“To adopt the village delimitation and name master map for Saipan as the sole village delimitation and name master map of Saipan and to approve for the Office of the Mayor of Saipan to be the primary custodian for maintaining and preserving the master map and for the Department of Commerce – Central Statistics Division to be the secondary custodian; and for other purposes.”

The following are some of our grave concerns:

1. The language provisions in this delimitation legislation are overbroad and exclusive in authority provided to each respective Mayors – Saipan, Tinian and Aguiguan, Luta (Rota), and Gani or the Northern Islands, each respective municipality sole discretion on street *i Chalan* and village *i Sengsong* naming and renaming, including boundary lines delineation within villages or delineation to create village or to delineate to create and/or dedicate a site. This legislation does not provide for consultation with the Indigenous Affairs Office nor consideration for public comment to afford the public consultation.
2. This legislation is in fact to validate, make legal, and to change the federal highway designations, Department of Public Works Highways – Roads and Highways posted signs; and CNMI public policies, rules, regulations, including to validate the Global Positioning System (GPS) and the Geographic Information System (GIS) Maps on the farce delimitation and delineation of San Jose village, Saipan – through a Map that delineated *San Jose village* to “*Oleai village*” that was recently done by the Mayor’s Office street naming task force who produced the “**unofficial**” Maps of all the villages in Saipan.

This unofficial village delineation was included in the recently concluded 2022 general election. The 2022 Board of Election Commission listed for the first time since the CNMI’s first General Election in 1976, and in the CNMI’s 47 years commonwealth history – a first in its voters listing “*Oleai*” as village in Election Precinct Three (3).

Moving forward this ‘unofficial’ change in the CNMI government’s Board of Election Voter Roster after April 2022 in the 2022 General Election that now included “*Oleai*” to replace a portion of the villages of *Chalan Kiya*, *Chalan Laulau* and *San Jose* is tantamount to election fraud.

Moving in tandem with this misinformation in Speaker Villagomez’ H.B. 22-82 is IT&E Telecommunication’s recent “notice” of relocation to its new office, which is still located in Chalan Laulau; but instead opted to say they moved to “*Oleai*” – before this legislation becomes law. The Joeten commercial building located on *Beach Road, Chalan Laulau* is identified as ‘*Oleai Business Building*’ where First Hawaiian Bank identified its branch location as “*Oleai Branch*” instead of the traditional Chamorro village of “*Chalan Laulau*” Branch; Calvo’s Select Care Insurance, identifies the office location as “*103 Beach Rd., Oleai, Saipan*”; and the CNMI’s Department of Public Works as “*5PF6+FVR, Oleai, Saipan 96950, Northern Mariana Islands*” (GPS/GIS address location). These are examples of continued incidents of colonialism in the CNMI.

And the continued and persistent movement of this force forward on the perpetuation of this farce history and misinformation includes the CNMI government’s agencies and departments such as Marianas Visitors Authority Marketing campaign, the Department of Planning and Development EDA Grants projects in collaboration with the Governor’s Council on Economic Development – through the “*Village Pride*” project validating the perpetual and permanent erasure of the traditional Chamorro villages of Chalan Laulau and Chalan Kiya; and San Jose village in honor of the Catholic Saint Joseph or Patron San Jose to that of “*Oleai Village.*”

The word “*Oleai*” is in fact “*Woleai*” is to recognize and acknowledge the several hundred native people of Woleai, Caroline Islands (academically references as “*Woleaian*”) who immigrated to the Northern Marianas during the colonial periods of Spain in the mid-1800s, Germany in the early 1900s, and Japan in the early to mid-1900s, immediately after several storms struck the Caroline Islands and atolls, including the ‘*Good Friday Storm of 1904*’ leaving many Carolinians (this includes Woleaians, the most in numbers that were resettled) to perish due to hunger. But hundreds survived because of Germany’s relocation and resettlement of hundreds of Carolinians to Saipan and Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands to live and work for the colonists.

Most of these Carolinians were resettled in the traditional Chamorro village of *Katan Uda* (Spanish written: *Kattan Huda*), which literally translates in Chamorro: “*North Mute*” or “*Silent North*” or “*North Silence.*” Chamorros who practiced Catholicism renamed this village in honor of Patron Saint Joseph. Hence, San Jose village or *i Sengsong San Jose*; not Oleai or Woleai.

It was common for some of the Carolinians to reference their native lands, which is Woleai or Oleai since some of the Carolinians were from other islands in the Carolines who part of the resettlement were natives of Satawal, Ulithi, Lamotrek, including natives from Palau, Caroline Islands of Tobi and Sonsorol. However, the most in numbers from the Carolines resettled in *i Sengsong Katan Uda* and *Chalan Laulau* (*San Jose village*) were from Woleai. It is only natural or common to reference themselves this, *Oleai* for *Woleai* (silent “w”).

Speaker Edmond Villagomez’ H.B. 22-82 is in fact a backtracking delimitation and delineation scheme legislation to ensure that the CNMI government and only a certain privileged private corporation doing business here in the Northern Mariana Islands receive validation for this farce history of our islands, traditional Chamorro villages and native people – a continued misinformation and continued colonization of our islands, people, traditional settlement sites, space and villages through what is referenced in academia as “*Settlers Colonialism*” in the Northern Mariana Islands’ contemporary history.

3. This legislation purports to use the Department of Commerce – Central Statistics Division (DOC-CSD) in carrying out the decennial census; for online businesses to be identified, and home postal delivery system as the core and one of the fundamental reasoning to validate the delineation of “Oleai” village when in fact, all the delimitation and delineation, village street naming and lot and house numbering has been accomplished already. But the Map that purports “*Oleai*” village was not an official map that has been shared and being utilized by the CNMI’s DPW Road and Highways for the eventual renaming and change of Road and Highways signages; including the sharing and utilization of GPS and GIS by Google maps that has been successfully utilizing these GPS and GIS information to identify “*Oleai*” instead of *Chalan Laulau* or *Chalan Kiya* or *San Jose* villages.
4. The legislations that created the street naming task force for the Office of the Mayor; and the house or lot numbering project, which is the global positioning system (GPS) and the geographic information system through the Department of Public Works, the Department of Planning and Development, the Department of Public Lands, and maybe several other recent access to this GPS/GIS information such as the Public School System Pupil Transportation, the Commonwealth Office of Transportation Administration.

It is our mission to ensure that we offer options when opposing any legislation, that said, we recommend that this body introduce a Senate Bill to create a “*Heritage and Historical Site Commission*” thereby the commission can come up with the recommendations to be considered by this body. The commission shall revisit all historical – pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary history of our islands to use as a guideline in naming or renaming any village or street as part of the Land Use Plan for our Commonwealth.

It is important that Matua Council shares with this honorable legislative body the plight of the native people in the last half-a-century since the signing of the Covenant in 1976 that established our sacred relationship with the United States of America after the end of World War Two in 1945.

We firmly believe, and will continue to echo the voices of the Chamorros – that we all have the moral and ethical duty towards the native people of the NMI to be a part of the healing process to mitigate the impact of the atrocities of colonization, population migration, environmental toxins, traditional gathering rights for food and medicinal plants, and diaspora of the Chamorros to faraway places in search of higher standard of living, accesses to quality healthcare, among other impactful issues – socially, economically, culturally, and traditionally. And more recently, the impact and effect on the lives of the indigenous people from the global pandemic – Corona virus, and climate change.

It is equally important that this honorable body – The Senate, recognize the impact on the indigenous population in the CNMI’s economic and political development in the last 47 years, and not to exclude the over 300 years of colonialism on the native Chamorros. The issues of economic development have placed a strain in the Chamorro society. Having said that, the host culture – the Chamorros is part of the over 28 ethnic demographics in the CNMI.

Our focus is to bring attention to the three recognized branches of the CNMI government – Executive or Administration, Legislative or Legislature, and Courts or Judiciary on the plight of the Chamorros “*Tãotão Tãno*” cultural and traditional values of *Inafa’ m̄olek*, *ina’ gofli’i*, and *ina’ tungu* as a roadmap to recovery and renaissance. It is important that this body – the Legislature use the 2010 U.S. Census, including the most recent 2020 census that has just been published as a baseline resource guide in moving forward on executing public policies affecting the indigenous people.

Economic development in the last half-a-century has placed a negative trend and predicament into the survival of the native peoples’ cultural values, social norms, and traditional practices that survived since prior to the arrival of the first western contact half-a-millennium or 500 years ago.

We must remind ourselves, government and private, that is our duty, responsibility, moral and ethical obligation to provide the greatest protection and safeguards as caretakers and stewards of the land on the continued survival of the cultural and traditional heritage of the native inhabitants of these archipelago.

In closing, on behalf of Matua Council for Native Chamorro Advancement, we look forward to the Senate's consideration to move H.B. 22-82 to be considered in the 23rd Legislature, and to create and establish the "*Heritage and Historical Site Commission*" to take into consideration the impact on the lives of the indigenous people of the Mariana Islands, the Chamorros – *i Tãotão Tãno*.

As always, please contact me via email at lianahofschneider@gmail.com or call me at 670.285.6242 if you need additional information or clarification on this request.

Respectfully yours yan si Yu'us Ma'ãsi,

/s/Liana M.S. Hofschneider
President

cc: Governor Ralph Dlg. Torres
Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios
Mayor David M. Apatang
Mayor Efraim Atalig
Mayor Edwin Aldan
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