

TWENTY-FIRST NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SESSION, 2020

C. Res. 21-12

A HOUSE COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION

To congratulate and commend America's Vocational Rehabilitation Program on successfully providing 100 years of service to individuals with a range of disabilities, whether visible or not.

1 **WHEREAS**, this year marks 100 years since the establishment of
2 America's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, which was created by
3 Congress in 1920 to assist individuals with physical disabilities. It was the first
4 federally funded program to assist people with disabilities who had not acquired
5 their disabilities as a result of serving in the military; and

6 **WHEREAS**, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Fess Act of
7 1920, also known as the Industrial Rehabilitation Act and referred to it as "The
8 National Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act," which was signed into law on
9 June 2, 1920; and

10 **WHEREAS**, today, vocational rehabilitation serves people with a range of
11 disabilities, whether visible or not. It also uses a dual-customer approach, working
12 to help businesses meet their workforce needs and providing consultation and
13 technical assistance; and

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION 21-12

1 **WHEREAS**, “the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) plays a
2 key leadership role through its resources and technical assistance to state
3 Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and others,” said Mark Schultz, the Office of
4 Special Education and Rehabilitative Services’ (OSERS). RSA commissioner,
5 delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties of the Assistant
6 Secretary for OSERS. “Those 100 years of experience bring a responsibility of
7 leadership on issues that impact the ability of individuals with disabilities to be
8 employed and live independently”; and

9 **WHEREAS**, currently, the U.S. Congress has appropriated \$3.7 billion
10 dollars in FY 2020, for Rehabilitation Services; and

11 **WHEREAS**, more than a billion people are estimated to live with some
12 form of disability, or about 15% of the world’s population (based on 2010 global
13 population estimates). This is higher than previous World Health Organization
14 estimates, which date from the 1970s and suggested around a 10% increase in
15 growing numbers; and

16 **WHEREAS**, the number of people with disabilities is growing. This is
17 because populations are aging-older people whom have a higher risk of disability-
18 and because of the global increase in chronic health conditions associated with
19 disability, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental illness. Chronic
20 diseases are estimated to account for 66.5% of all years lived with disability in low-
21 income and middle income countries. Patterns of disability in a particular country
22 are influenced by trends in health and environmental conditions and other factors—

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION 21-12

1 such as road traffic crashes, natural disasters, conflict, diet, and substance abuse;
2 and

3 **WHEREAS**, in 2019, 19.3% of persons with a disability were employed,
4 as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In contrast, the employment-
5 population ratio for persons without a disability was 66.3%. The unemployment
6 rates for both persons with and without a disability declined from the previous year
7 to 7.3% and 3.5% respectively; and

8 **WHEREAS**, the CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) was
9 established in 1975 and serves three major islands: Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The
10 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is the advisory body of OVR. The purpose of
11 the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is to maximize employment, economic
12 self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society by
13 assisting eligible individuals with disabilities to prepare for, enter into, engage in,
14 advance in, or retain employment consistent with the consumer's unique strengths,
15 resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;
16 and

17 **WHEREAS**, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce
18 Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, is the Federal Legislation that
19 reauthorizes the formula grants programs of vocational rehabilitation, supported
20 employment, independent living, and client assistance. WIOA supersedes the
21 Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amends the Adult Education and Family
22 Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Act,

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION 21-12

1 which took effect on July 01, 2015, brings together, in strategic coordination, the
2 core federal program's investment in skills development through: employment and
3 training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth and Wagner-Peyser
4 employment services administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) through
5 formula grants to states; and adult education and literacy programs and Vocational
6 Rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in
7 obtaining employment administered by the Department of Education (DoED); and

8 **WHEREAS**, WIOA authorizes programs for specific vulnerable
9 populations, including the Job Corps, YouthBuild, Indian and Native Americans,
10 and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs as well as evaluation and
11 multistate projects administered by DOL. WIOA also established mandated set
12 aside funds for Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS). The four required
13 PreETS are: counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive
14 transition or post-secondary education programs at institutions of higher education;
15 workplace readiness training; instruction in self-advocacy; and work-based
16 learning experiences; and

17 **WHEREAS**, WIOA ensures that employment and training services
18 provided by the core programs are coordinated and complementary so that job
19 seekers acquire skills and credentials that meet employers' needs. To achieve this,
20 the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) developed and
21 submitted a four-year strategy—in the form of a single unified strategic plan for
22 core programs (CNMI OVR, CNMI Workforce Investment Agency and the CNMI

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION 21-12

1 Adult Basic Education Program)—for preparing and educating workforce and
2 meeting the workforce needs of employers; and

3 **WHEREAS**, OVR’s mission is to increase employment and promote
4 independence among eligible individuals with disabilities throughout the CNMI.
5 OVR’s employment programs assist qualified people with disabilities to prepare
6 for, enter into, engage in, advance in, or retain employment (Title I – Basic Support)
7 and provide services to consumers with the most significant disabilities to become
8 and remain successfully and competitively employed in integrated workplace
9 settings (Title IV, Part B – Supported Employment). VR services are
10 individualized and directly related to the consumer’s disabilities and employment
11 goal. Examples of services include: vocational counseling and guidance,
12 information and referral, job search and placement assistance, vocational training
13 or education, transition services, assistive technologies, and other services that may
14 be required by the consumer to obtain or maintain employment. In addition to
15 OVR’s employment program the Independent Living Program for Older
16 Individuals who are Blind (ILOB). ILOB serves individuals age 55 or older whose
17 severe visual impairment makes competitive employment difficult to obtain but for
18 whom independent living goals are feasible. The program also aims to maximize
19 the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with
20 disabilities and to integrate them into the mainstream of society. OVR serves
21 consumers on a CNMI-wide basis and has served over 755 people over fiscal years
22 2017 to 2019; and

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION 21-12

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the House of
2 Representatives of the Twenty-First Northern Marianas Commonwealth
3 Legislature that the House congratulates and commends America's Vocational
4 Rehabilitation Program on successfully providing 100 years of service to
5 individuals with a range of disabilities, whether visible or not; and

6 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Sponsor of this Resolution or the
7 designee of the Speaker of the House shall present a certified original copy of this
8 House Commemorative Resolution; and

9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Speaker of the House of
10 Representatives shall certify, and the House Clerk shall attest to the adoption of this
11 resolution and thereafter the House Clerk shall transmit a certified copy to Maryann
12 Borja-Arriola, Director, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; Honorable Ralph
13 DLG. Torres, Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;
14 Honorable Arnold I. Palacios, Lieutenant Governor, Commonwealth of the
15 Northern Mariana Islands; Honorable Gregorio Kili Camacho Sablan, CNMI
16 Delegate to the United States Congress, 116th United States Congress; Honorable
17 Victor B. Hocog, Senate President, Twenty First Northern Marianas
18 Commonwealth Legislature; Honorable David M. Apatang, Mayor of Saipan;
19 Honorable Vicente C. Santos, Mayor of the Northern Islands; Honorable Edwin P.
20 Aldan, Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan; and Honorable Efraim M. Atalig, Mayor of
21 Rota.

Prefiled 6/2/2020

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION 21-12

Date: 6/2/2020

Introduced by: [Signature]
Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez

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