

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 658 Session of 2017

INTRODUCED BY YAW AND REGAN, MAY 2, 2017

REFERRED TO STATE GOVERNMENT, MAY 2, 2017

AN ACT

1 Designating the Eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*
 2 *alleganiensis*) as the official amphibian of the Commonwealth
 3 of Pennsylvania.

4 The General Assembly finds that:

5 (1) The Eastern hellbender is a unique amphibian native
 6 to a select handful of areas, one of which is this
 7 Commonwealth.

8 (2) The Eastern hellbender is the largest North American
 9 salamander and is the third largest salamander in the world,
 10 with the ability to grow to 29 inches in length.

11 (3) The Eastern hellbender is not listed as the official
 12 amphibian of any other state or commonwealth despite its
 13 range.

14 (4) The Eastern hellbender is considered an indicator
 15 species due to its sensitivity to poor water quality and
 16 pollution.

17 (5) Pennsylvania is widely known for waterways, rivers
 18 and streams that reach an approximate total length of 1,239
 19 square miles and have a great value to Pennsylvania's economy

1 and environment.

2 (6) Pennsylvania has had a history of poor water quality
3 due to pollution and other elements.

4 (7) The Eastern hellbender is considered a species of
5 special concern in this Commonwealth and in New York.

6 (8) The Eastern hellbender is listed as endangered in
7 Maryland, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana and is considered
8 threatened in Alabama.

9 (9) The Eastern hellbender population is drastically
10 declining due to poor water quality in Pennsylvania's rivers
11 and streams.

12 (10) The Eastern hellbender has been historically found
13 in nearly every western county in Pennsylvania; however,
14 recent studies show approximately half of those counties no
15 longer support the species.

16 (11) Due to the Eastern hellbender's sensitivity and
17 status as an indicator species, it proves to be a positive
18 symbol for water quality efforts in Pennsylvania.

19 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
20 hereby enacts as follows:

21 Section 1. Official State amphibian.

22 The Eastern hellbender is selected, designated and adopted as
23 the official amphibian of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

24 Section 2. Effective date.

25 This act shall take effect immediately.