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February 3, 2025

Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher presenting

LD 72, An Act to Designate the Spring Peeper as the Official State Amphibian

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Good afternoon, Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Salisbury and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. I am Laurie Osher, and I represent House District 25 in Orono. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 72, An Act to Designate the Spring Peeper as the Official State Amphibian**.

At only about an inch long, the spring peeper is Maine's smallest frog, but it is one of our most recognizable and beloved signs of spring. The spring peeper is named for – and best known for – its breeding call, which many individual frogs contribute to form an enchanting chorus when the landscape begins to thaw. In communities across the state, anywhere near spring peeper habitat, their song is a welcome connection to the natural world outside our doors.

I introduced this bill and its companion, LD 73, after a critter-loving constituent posed the question, "Why doesn't Maine have a State Amphibian?" It was a good question, so I consulted my friend and former colleague Dr. Aram Calhoun, University of Maine professor emerita of wetland ecology. She consulted with her two co-editors of the book *Maine Amphibians and Reptiles* and suggested I sponsor legislation to create both a state amphibian: the spring peeper, and a state reptile: the wood turtle.

I believe our chosen symbols are important. They reflect our values and our shared identity. Naming a state amphibian and a state reptile, in particular, highlights the natural wonders that are so central to our state's character and reminds us of the importance of protecting what makes Maine so special.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.