

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2747

As Passed House:
February 19, 2020

Title: An act relating to establishing the state microanimal.

Brief Description: Establishing the state microanimal.

Sponsors: Representatives Ramel, Lekanoff, Riccelli and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/29/20, 2/5/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/19/20, 93-5.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designates the tardigrade as the official state microanimal.
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Gregerson, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Dolan, Hudgins, Mosbrucker and Smith.

Staff: Carrington Skinner (786-7192).

Background:

The tardigrade, also known as the water bear or moss piglet, is a microscopic animal that lives in virtually every habitat on Earth and can be found in every county in Washington. Tardigrades live in lichens and moss, as well as in marine and freshwater sediments, soil, sea water, fresh water, glaciers, hot springs, deserts, and rain forests. The phylum *tardigrada*, whose name derives from Latin words meaning "slow stepper," contains more than 1,000 species. Tardigrades have barrel-shaped bodies with four pairs of stubby legs, and typically range in length from 0.3 to 0.5 millimeters, though some species may exceed 1 millimeter.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Many species of tardigrade are known for being able to survive in extreme conditions, including high and low temperatures and the vacuum of outer space. They have been identified in fossil records dating back 530 million years, and have survived the past five mass extinctions on Earth. Some tardigrades are able to change into a "tun" state that protects the animal when it is experiencing life-threatening situations, including a lack of water or oxygen. Tardigrades have been studied for methods to adapt to climate change and withstand radiation damage from cancer treatment due to their ability to survive in extreme conditions.

Tardigrades play a role in soil health, as they eat microorganisms that can destroy crops, such as nematodes, as well as bacteria, fungi, and plant cells. In processing organic matter, they help to clean soil and water.

Washington has previously designated several animals as official state symbols, including the Olympic marmot as the state endemic mammal, the Pacific chorus frog as the state amphibian, and the steelhead trout as the state fish.

Summary of Bill:

The tardigrade is designated as the official state microanimal of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The tardigrade should be made the official state microanimal because it is beneficial to the environment and to medical research. Scientists are discovering a great deal about these microanimals, including how they help to keep the soil healthy and how their adaptive qualities could be studied to treat certain diseases. Designating the tardigrade as the state microanimal will bring additional awareness so that they continue to be researched. Tardigrades are resilient creatures, having survived five mass extinctions. This designation will make Washington the first state with an official state microanimal.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ramel, prime sponsor; Ayla Ridwan; Elizabeth Lee; Kai Di Bona; Ivonne Plaza; Raylee Miniken; Clarissa Felix; and Felicitas Aguayo.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.