

Black Swallowtail Bill: HB5642

March 17, 2022 was lucky for the Irish and for Michigan House Bill 5642 (HB5642) which would designate the Black Swallowtail butterfly as the official butterfly for the great state of Michigan.

Under the tenure of Michigan Garden Club President, Marilyn MacIntosh, a Committee of Butterfly experts was formed to research and recommend an official Michigan Garden Club Butterfly. After much research and discussion, the committee recommended the Black Swallowtail. The selection was subsequently ratified by the members. Michigan Garden Clubs sought sponsors to promote the Black Swallowtail as the official State of Michigan butterfly thereby giving notice and image to the importance of pollinators, the fragility of butterflies, and our mission to protect the environment.

Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc. (MGC) has worked diligently since March 2016. Senate Bill (SB850) was introduced supporting the Black Swallowtail butterfly as the official state representative of all pollinators. No action was taken by the Senate before the 2015-2016 session ended, therefore the bill died. Subsequent senate bills were introduced in 2017 (SB298) and in 2019 (SB167) which met the same fate. In March 2019, HB 4314 was introduced and like its predecessors it was assigned to the Government Operations Committee. Again, it did not get a hearing before session ended.

Past-President Janet Hickman wrote letters in support of SB167 and HB4314. More recently, Janet wrote to Rep. Julie Brixie (D) 69th House District encouraging reintroduction of a bill that would name the Black Swallowtail butterfly as our official butterfly. On December 14, 2021, Rep. Brixie introduced HB5642 with Rep. James Lilly 89th District as co-sponsor. This time the bill was assigned to the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Committee. Perseverance paid off!

Monica Taylor, Michigan Garden Clubs (MGC) President and Jeanette Meyer, MGC Legislative Chair testified at the hearing in support of the bill. Also, Sue Leahy, previous MGC Legislative chair, testified on behalf of the Meridian Garden Club in support of the bill. Several members of the MGC were present for the hearing to provide support.

The fourth graders of the Okemos Central Montessori School pointed out to the committee that Michigan is one of two states without an official butterfly and asked that we not be the last! Iowa is the other state without a state butterfly. As a committee member pointed out, “Iowa beat Michigan for the Big 10 basketball championship. Let’s not let them beat us in naming an official state butterfly!”

UPDATE HB 5642: The Black Swallowtail Bill is now awaiting placement on the House agenda. Rep. Brixie’s office would like our support by sending letters to all members of the House. *Most importantly, we need letters advocating the bill to Speaker Wentworth and Majority Floor Leader Frederick. It would also be very helpful for garden clubs to schedule meetings with their offices as well.* Please refer to the template for a letter to be sent to the House members. I have included their contact information below.

Speaker Wentworth

Majority Floor Leader Frederic

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It is crucial that MGC members act now to push HB5642 forward. This bill can move forward only with the support of MGC members and clubs.

Jeanette Meyer, MGC Legislative Chair