

Statement of Congressman Hakeem Jeffries

Legislative Hearing of the Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
H.R. 2026, The Global Amphibian Protection Act
July 29, 2021

Thank you to Chair Jared Huffman and Ranking Member Cliff Bentz of the Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife for having this hearing today and for considering H.R. 2026, the Global Amphibian Protection Act of 2021. It is not often that a Brooklyn-native gets to advocate for the importance and urgency of amphibian conservation, and I am grateful to have that opportunity today.

There are roughly 7,000 identified species of amphibians around the world. Unfortunately, nearly 70% of amphibians are either threatened by extinction or are in decline due to disease, habitat loss and pollution, among other factors. That means an overwhelming number are in dire need of conservation strategies to avoid extinction. In fact, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service if immediate conservation actions are not taken, certain amphibian species may be completely wiped off the face of the earth in just a few years.

Amphibians are a keystone in many ecosystems, and their disappearance would result in dramatic environmental changes with far reaching consequences. Beyond the environmental impact, amphibians provide benefits to human health, preying on insects like mosquitos which helps prevent the spread of diseases like malaria. Furthermore, many amphibians play a vital role in the research of innovative drugs and the rapid decline of the species could create new health and national security risks.

H.R. 2026, the Global Amphibian Protection Act seeks to reverse this alarming trend by reinforcing and revitalizing amphibian-focused conservation efforts around the world. Specifically, this bill would support species-saving activities through a competitive grant program administered by the Department of the Interior. The program would build on the successes of the Amphibians in Decline Conservation Fund which operated effectively over the course of six years, distributing over \$1,000,000 and leveraging an additional \$2,600,000 in matching funds for amphibian conservation projects.

The Global Amphibian Protection Act includes specific safeguards and clear criteria to ensure that federal funds are well spent and target the most at risk species. It further provides that grant proposals with matching funds available shall be given preferential treatment and allows for the Secretary to accept donations.

Conservation activities supported by the legislation include recovering and maintaining health populations of amphibian species, supporting compliance with relevant conservation laws and providing important scientific information relating to amphibian conservation. Eligible applicants for the grant include wildlife management authorities of a foreign country with a natural habitat of a highly endangered amphibian species or any person or group with that has demonstrated the expertise required to implement conservation strategies of a highly endangered amphibian species.

This bill has broad support from groups across the conservation and animal welfare communities including African Wildlife Foundation, Amphibian Survival Alliance, Animal Welfare Institute, Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Bonobo Conservation Initiative, Born Free USA, Center for

Biological Diversity, Cheetah Conservation Fund, Conservation International, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Investigation Agency, Global Wildlife Conservation, Humane Society International, Humane Society Legislative Fund, The Humane Society of the United States, International Crane Foundation, International Elephant Foundation, International Fund for Animal Welfare, International Rhino Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Rare Species Fund, Wild Earth Allies, Wildlife Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund. I would like to thank them for their advocacy in this effort.

I would also like to acknowledge Chair Huffman, Rep. Vern Buchanan and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick for joining me in sponsoring this measure and for their bipartisan leadership in helping to prevent the extinction of these imperiled amphibian species.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I urge you to support H.R. 2026, the Global Amphibian Protection Act.