



DELMARVA POULTRY INDUSTRY, INC.

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Date: March 4, 2020
To: Members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee
From: Holly Porter, Executive Director
Re: HB 1312 – Water Pollution Control – Discharge Permits – Industrial Poultry Operations - **Oppose**

Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. (DPI), the 1,700-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, processing companies and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware opposes HB 1312 and urges an unfavorable committee report.

HB 1312 would create a new definition of an industrial poultry operation, being one that raises 300,000 chickens per year and/or two or more farms that total 300,000 chickens per year that are operated by the same owner, and prohibits the Maryland Department of the Environment from issuing a stormwater, general or individual discharge permit for those operations.

In summary, this bill as written, is a **moratorium** on any new or expanding poultry farms and would shut down any current farms that are defined as industrial poultry in five years when the general CAFO permit is reissued.

Maryland's Eastern Shore is home to more than 600 family farms raising chickens, with an average farm size of 3-4 chicken houses. There are nearly 6,000 Maryland jobs directly tied to the chicken industry, with more than 4,800 of those on the Eastern Shore. This is an industry that pays more than \$140 million in state and local taxes, much of which goes directly to the local Eastern Shore. This bill would devastate the economy and the people that call those Eastern Shore counties their home.

Today's chicken farms are more modern, efficient and environmentally friendly than ever before. Chicken farmers grow the same amount of birds in less chicken houses than 20 years ago, a testament to the sustainability of the industry. That means that today's modern chicken farm would be considered "industrial" with less than two houses. In order for a farmer to pay for the \$100,000 or more in just the stormwater management requirements, most new farms will need four houses to have any income.

The definition of an industrial operation is simply a label – it has no meaning and no intent. It is a label that is being offered by groups that have made it clear in their statements and on their websites that they want to end what we term as modern agriculture, but they term as factory or industrial.* Research has shown that

*<https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/problems/factory-farming-food-safety>

**<https://www.cbf.org/news-media/newsroom/2019/maryland/new-study-estimates-ammonia-emissions-from-poultry-farms-on-marylands-eastern-shore.html>

***https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/tell-maryland-legislators-to-oppose-the-chicken?fbclid=IwAR2W2y1HqPGhh1nQaF8yV8FaNreEe12QhsfkxifjXd_hTGDyxBB4z8FbWbQ

consumers trust farmers and the proponents know that. By labeling chicken farmers as industrial operators, it tries to paint a different story of trusting where our food comes from.

These same organizations have spent considerable time gathering reports and studies trying to blame chicken farms for public health issues. However, they have not found a study with direct impacts (not assumptions and correlations) and they have not bothered to spend money to do additional research.

DPI, along with the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment is spending money (nearly \$500,000) to gather data on ambient air monitoring (community air) and partnering with the regulatory agency, the Maryland Department of the Environment, to collect this information, so that it is transparent and public.

And an ammonia emissions modeling study released this past December and supported by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation found no levels of ammonia in Maryland that were at levels or concentrations for an effect on human health, even with flawed assumptions that birds were in chicken houses year-round. The limited air monitoring that was conducted recorded the highest levels of ammonia in a city and at a waterfront point.**

DPI feels that HB 1312 is a direct attack on the chicken community and our membership and others agree. A recent online petition*** produced more than 100 signatures in less than a week of those in opposition of this bill, with comments including:

“My 45-year career and now my son’s employment depends on a viable poultry industry. Please do not put our livelihood at risk due to the misguided SB 841 and HB 1312.”

“The poultry industry on the Delmarva Peninsula is an essential part of many communities. The proposed bills would do irreparable harm to many whom count on this industry for a living.”

“This will kill the economy on the Eastern Shore.”

“Keep legislating farmers out of business and all our food will come from other countries – with little or no testing/supervision. Keep American Farmers Strong!”

“This bill is not a moratorium; this bill will bankrupt Maryland’s family farms.”

DPI, along with hundreds of others in the chicken community urge an unfavorable vote on HB 1312.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at porter@dpichicken.com or 302-222-4069 or Nick Manis, Manis Canning & Associates, 410-263-7882.

*<https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/problems/factory-farming-food-safety>

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