



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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March 2, 2023

To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Agriculture – Confinement of Egg – Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production – Prohibitions – SB 690 -Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee vote favorably for Agriculture – Confinement of Egg – Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production – Prohibitions – SB 690.

Most hens in the egg industry are crammed into wire cages so small they can't even spread their wings. Packed five or more to a cage, each hen is forced to spend her whole life in a meager amount of space that is smaller than the dimensions of an iPad. Virtually unable to move, the hens are prohibited from engaging in almost any of their natural behaviors, like perching, nesting, and dustbathing.

SB 690 contains the United Egg Producers' own cage-free standards. These standards allow the birds to perform important natural behaviors like flapping their wings, walking, bathing and laying eggs in nest boxes. Requiring all eggs produced and sold in Maryland to meet the industry's own cage-free standards would improve quality of life for over five million egg-laying hens every year. Moreover, the majority of US current egg production relies on battery cages, a known source of disease for chickens and humans.

Ten states have already passed legislation or regulations banning cages for egg-laying hens, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Colorado, Utah, Michigan, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, and Nevada. Battery cages for egg-laying hens are prohibited in eighteen countries, including the European Union, India, New Zealand, Israel, Norway, and Switzerland.

Marylanders believe in compassion for *all* animals, not just pets. New polling numbers from YouGov show that seventy-six percent of Maryland voters support their legislators voting in favor of cage-free egg legislation like SB 690, while only 17 percent oppose.

We need to take action to promote the health and well-being of egg laying hens and Marylanders.

In closing, I would like to thank Senator Lewis Young her sponsorship of SB 690 and ask the committee for a favorable report.