



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW  
Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20037  
P 202-452-1100  
F 202-778-6132  
humanesociety.org

March 2, 2023

Maryland Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

---

Charles A. Laue  
*Chair*

Brad Jakeman  
*Vice Chair*

Kitty Block  
*Chief Executive Officer  
and President*

William H. Hall  
*Treasurer and  
Chief Financial Officer*

Angela Ciccolo  
*General Counsel  
and Chief Legal Officer*

Alison Corcoran  
*Chief Development  
and Marketing Officer*

Erin Frackleton  
*Chief Operating Officer*

Marshall Taylor  
*Chief People Officer*

Nicole Paquette  
*Chief Program  
and Policy Officer*

Miguel Abi-hassan  
*Chief Animal Rescue, Care  
and Sanctuary Officer*

Sara Amundson  
*Chief Government  
Relations Officer*

Jeffrey Flocken  
*Chief International Officer*

Johanie V. Parra  
*Secretary*

#### **DIRECTORS**

Susan Atherton  
Yolanda Berkowitz  
Georgina Bloomberg  
J. Elizabeth Bradham  
Marcus East  
Carolyn N. Everson  
Caren M. Fleit  
Robert A. Greenspon  
Brad Jakeman  
Cathy Kangas  
Sylvia T. Kaser, Esq  
Adi Kumar  
Charles A. Laue  
C. Thomas McMillen  
David S. Niekerk  
Thomas J. Sabatino, Jr.  
Suzy Welch

### **RE: Strong support for SB690**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and members of the committee: The Maryland-based Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), on behalf of our thousands of supporters across the state, thank Senator Lewis Young for introducing SB690. Eggs in Maryland should be safer, more affordable and more humanely produced. SB690 will make safer foods more affordable for Maryland residents, and we wholeheartedly support the passage of this measure.

On many egg factory farms, hens are crammed into cages so small the birds can't spread their wings. Each bird is given less space than the dimensions of an iPad on which to live her entire life. She's forced to eat, sleep, and defecate in the same space and is denied almost everything that is natural to her. These conditions are cruel to the animals and increase the spread of diseases, like salmonella, which can then sicken people. Extensive research shows that locking hens in cages increases the risk of Salmonella contamination, a bacteria that can be lethal, especially in children and the elderly.

SB690 codifies where the market is already going. More than 200 of the country's largest food companies have committed to switching to a 100 percent cage-free egg supply. This includes Burger King, Unilever, General Mills, Aramark, Costco, and Target, along with Maryland-based Sodexo and Marriott. Almost all of these companies are going to get to cage-free before the 2025 deadline proposed in SB690.

Currently, retailers charge a premium for cage-free eggs. Because of this artificial premium, lower income Maryland residents have a harder time purchasing cage-free eggs. Since cage-free eggs will become the new standard under SB690, that artificial premium will go away. Retailers will market cage-free as their "value" egg to draw customer foot traffic, just like they do today with eggs from caged hens. So, SB690 will give more access to safer food for Maryland families.

[Egg industry data](#) and consumer data shows that egg prices in California—which has a nearly identical law prohibiting the sale of eggs from hens in



cages—changed by less than a penny per egg once the law was implemented. In addition, the hidden costs of such inhumane confinement are increased cruelty and food safety risks. It's animals and consumers who are currently paying those hidden prices.

The current price disruptions in the egg market are largely due to a national bird flu outbreak and higher feed and energy costs, not cage-free egg laws. [According to the USDA](#), more than 40 million chickens have been killed because of the current outbreak of avian flu. While the latest outbreak of avian flu has been disastrous, Maryland residents shouldn't have to wait indefinitely to gain better access to safer eggs that also align with their values.

SB690 is in line with laws enacted in other states. Over the past several years, red, blue and purple states have passed similar measures, like California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Arizona. Utah and Rhode Island have also passed cage-free egg standards. These measures all garnered strong bipartisan support.

In addition to aligning with other states, SB690 is farmer-friendly by providing market and regulatory certainty. The bill contains the egg industry's own cage-free standards. The United Egg Producers' modest guidelines on cage-free systems allow hens to perform important natural behaviors like flapping their wings, walking, perching, dustbathing and laying eggs in nest boxes. SB690 is based on these guidelines. It also contains an exemption for small and family farmers with flocks fewer than 3,000 birds. Additionally, the bill only applies to egg-laying hens, not broiler chickens (i.e., birds who are used for their meat). So, it wouldn't impact Perdue or any other broiler producer.

By ensuring better welfare standards for birds, this bill will make safer food more affordable for Maryland families. Maryland has consistently been a leader in protecting animals from abuse and in promoting ethical business practices, and SB690 fits perfectly with that tradition.

For the foregoing reasons, we kindly urge you to vote yes on SB690.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel  
Maryland State Director  
The Humane Society of the United States