

March 1, 2023

To: The Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

The following testimony is in support of SB0690, which will require all eggs produced and sold in Maryland to meet the industry's own cage-free standards to improve quality of life for over 5 million egg-laying hens every year--hens now often suffering in cages so confining that they can't move or spread their wings.

I have a personal interest in this bill because for 16 years I have volunteered at Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary in Montgomery County, a sanctuary that offers exemplary care and a forever home for relinquished, rescued, and formerly abused farm animals, including chickens. I have learned that chickens are much like humans in that they form and enjoy friendships among themselves. The sanctuary chickens are not confined to cages, and I witness their joy in being able to explore the chicken yard, scratch for bugs, and generally enjoy life the way chickens are meant to.

Chickens can carry Salmonella, and a European Food Safety Authority study found that there were significantly higher Salmonella rates found in operations that confine hens in cages, so approving this bill would also promote food safety.

Please do the humane thing and join Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and seven other states which have enacted similar legislation. Improve the lives of these sentient beings, and help protect the public health, by approving this bill.

Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration.

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