



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0193
CONFINEMENT OF EGG-LAYING HENS IN COMMERCIAL EGG
PRODUCTION - PROHIBITIONS**

Bill Sponsor: Senator Lewis Young

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0193 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The Eastern Shore is home to some of the most extensive chicken farming operations in the nation. Air quality issues and asthma rates are soaring from the toxic chemicals that have permeated the air around these large chicken operations. The chickens also suffer. Caged chickens are usually kept in battery cages their entire productive life; they can barely stand up, cannot spread their wings, and are denied natural behaviors like roosting, nesting, perching and bathing. They are fed antibiotics to control the spread of disease.

This legislation, if enacted, would require a cage-free housing system for chickens starting in 2026. The system would require one square foot of usable space for each chicken and allow them access to the outdoors. It would also require the chicken farmer to obtain a certificate from the Maryland Department of Agriculture that states that they are providing a cage-free environment for their chickens in order to sell the chicken eggs.

Without the certificate, they will not be able to sell the eggs. If they are found to have violated these requirements, they would be subject to a civil fine of up to \$5,000 per violation.

It is likely that enacting these regulations will increase the cost of chicken eggs, and chickens in general, but it is a matter of health and safety for both the chickens and the public at large.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.