

**SB193\_Favorable\_NancyPerry\_ASPCA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Adam Mason

Position: FAV



**Date:** Tuesday, January 23, 2024

**Time and Location:** 1:00 pm in the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

**To:** Sen. Brian Feldman, Chair  
Sen. Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment

**Submitted by:** Nancy Perry, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, ASPCA

**RE:** Support of SB 193: Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the over 25,000 Maryland citizens we represent and our more than 2 million supporters nationwide, I am here today to voice our strong support for SB 193. This bill would improve the welfare of millions of laying hens, align Maryland with the broader movement to transition to higher-welfare farming systems and ensure that farmers in the state can lead the way in meeting the ever-growing demand for cage-free eggs.

Public surveys have shown time and time again that people are concerned about the welfare of farm animals. This concern and increasing demand for more humane options has led more than 200 companies to commit to adopting cage-free systems, including companies like McDonald's, Costco, and Walmart, as well as Maryland-based Sodexo and Marriott. State legislatures have also responded to this demand- 15 other states have banned confinement and committed to phasing in cage or crate-free farming systems in some form.

Many farmers are understandably very interested in transitioning to or expanding the capacity of their existing higher-welfare and cage-free systems. Providing laying hens with cage-free, enriched environments better matches consumer expectations and improves laying hen welfare by ensuring they're able to carry out necessary natural behaviors like nesting, perching, and dustbathing. Cage-free systems utilizing lower stocking densities and more enrichments are often better systems for farmers and workers as well, with improved air quality and overall working environments.

SB 193 is a common-sense bill that spells out clear space and environmental enrichment requirements and exempts producers raising fewer than 3,000 birds, making compliance simpler for existing laying-hen producers while allowing smaller Maryland farmers more flexibility. SB 193 will help ensure increased viability for Maryland farmers, better lives for Maryland's animals, and increased access to products that align with Marylander's values.

For these reasons, the ASPCA respectfully urges this committee to vote in support of SB 193 and I thank the committee for their consideration today.

Sincerely,

Nancy Perry  
Senior Vice President of Government Relations  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

**MD - SB 193 - cage free - written testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alicia Prygoski

Position: FAV



To: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
From: Animal Legal Defense Fund  
Re: Support Letter for SB 193  
Date: January 22, 2024

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals and has been working for over four decades to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Maryland, I respectfully ask that you support SB 193, which would prohibit extreme confinement for egg-laying hens and the sale of eggs that come from hens raised in cages.

Hens at many industrial animal agriculture facilities – including some in Maryland – are crammed so densely into cages that they cannot even move around or spread their wings. They live their entire lives this way, unable to engage in any natural behaviors that are critical to their well-being. Additionally, packing hens into cages in this manner increases the risk for zoonotic disease transmission, as diseases spread at a faster rate among animals confined more closely together. We are currently in the largest outbreak of Avian Flu in U.S. history, with approximately 80 million birds being killed to control the spread of the disease. Prohibiting the raising of hens in cages and eggs that come from from hens raised in cages will help curb the rate of transmission for Avian Flu and other diseases, like salmonella, that can infect humans and make us gravely ill.

SB 193 would protect hens from cruelty, provide safer options for Maryland consumers at the grocery store, reduce the risk for zoonotic disease transmission, and make Maryland a leader in the nationwide trend for more humane egg options.

It is abundantly clear that the future of egg production is cage-free and passing SB 193 into law will put Maryland at the forefront of this national shift.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Prygoski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alicia Prygoski  
Strategic Legislative Affairs Manager  
Animal Legal Defense Fund

# **SB0193\_Favorable\_Compassion in World Farming.pdf**

Uploaded by: Allison Molinaro

Position: FAV

**Date:** January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

**Time & Location:** 1:00pm – West Miller Senate Building, Room 2, Annapolis, MD

**To:** Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair  
and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Submitted by:** Allie Molinaro, Campaigns Manager, Compassion in World Farming

**RE:** Testimony in support of SB0193: Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and our Maryland supporters, we write in support of SB0193. CIWF is an international non-profit organization active on a wide range of agricultural issues that impact animal welfare, the environment, community justice, and public health. Our goal is to transform our global food system from one that is exploitative and profit-driven to one that is equitable, sustainable, and compassionate for all living beings. CIWF is heartened to see the Maryland legislature’s continued interest in ensuring safer and more humane agricultural practices. CIWF supports SB0193 because the measure would: 1) improve welfare for hens in Maryland and at farms who choose to sell eggs in Maryland, 2) support the industry’s shift to cage-free, 3) safeguard public health, and 4) benefit smallholder and local Maryland egg producers.

### 1. Animal Welfare

**Cage-free housing ensures baseline welfare standards for egg-laying hens.** Battery cages are one of the leading causes of animal suffering. Just like wild and companion animals, hens must execute species-specific behaviors to achieve optimal health and mental wellbeing. For hens, these behaviors include foraging, nesting, dustbathing, preening, and perching. Battery cages offer neither the space nor resources to execute any of these behaviors, as each hen is given typically no more space than the size of a standard A4 sheet of paper and a bare metal cage. Hens

are instinctually compelled to perform these behaviors and become physically and psychologically distressed when they are unable to do so, showing multiple signs of frustration including distress calls, pacing, and feather-pecking. Hens who lack access to forage material are more likely to peck at other birds in their cage out of frustration, which can lead to feather loss, injury, and in severe cases, death.<sup>1</sup> Some hens in battery cages also perform what is called “sham dustbathing,” where they attempt to dustbathe by rubbing their feathers against the bars of the cage, which also causes feather loss. Without their feathers for insulation, the hens are unable to thermoregulate, and may experience chronic cold or heat stress. Finally, hens in battery cages who are sick or injured tend to suffer for unnecessarily prolonged periods because they are difficult for workers to spot. Some die in their cage and are left unnoticed until their cage-mates are gathered for slaughter. Birds in caged systems suffer a greater incidence of osteoporosis and broken bones due to the inability to walk, jump, or fly, and about 74% of hens raised in battery cages die from fatty liver hemorrhagic syndrome, as compared to only 0 – 5% of hens in cage-free systems.<sup>2,3</sup>

In contrast, hens in cage-free systems with enrichments like the ones required in SB0193 can both exercise and engage in natural behaviors, resulting in less disease, feather pecking, stress, and exceptionally better lives for the hens when properly managed. Some reluctant producers cite keel bone injuries, which can occur in cage-free systems, as a reason to continue using battery cages. However, the incidence of keel bone fracture is greatly reduced when hens are reared as pullets (young hens) in the same type of housing system they will live in as adults, so they learn how to navigate the aviary early in life. In addition, caged hens are in fact at greater risk for bone fractures during depopulation, since their bones are weaker due to lack of exercise.<sup>4</sup> Proponents of caged systems also argue that injurious feather pecking and mortalities happen in both caged and cage-free housing. However, proper management of cage-free systems that prevents stress, boredom, and hunger significantly reduces the likelihood of harmful behaviors.

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<sup>1</sup> See H.J. Blokhuis, P.R. Wiepkema (1998) *Studies of feather pecking in poultry*, Veterinary Quarterly, 20:1, 6-9, DOI: 10.1080/01652176.1998.9694825

<sup>2</sup> See C.C. Whitehead and R.H Fleming. *Osteoporosis in Cage Layers*, Poultry Science, Vol. 79, Is. 7, pp. 1033 - 1041 (2000). [Osteoporosis in Cage Layers - ScienceDirect](#)

<sup>3</sup> See A. Shini, S. Shini & W. L. Bryden (2019) *Fatty liver hemorrhagic syndrome occurrence in laying hens: impact of production system*, Avian Pathology, 48:1, 25-34, DOI: 10.1080/03079457.2018.1538550

<sup>4</sup> See C.M. Sherwin, G.J. Richards, and C.J. Nicol (2010) *Comparison of the welfare of layer hens in 4 housing systems in the UK*. British Poultry Science, 51(4), pp.488-499.



The University of Bristol’s Featherwel guide outlines 46 management strategies for reducing injurious pecking, including matching pullet rearing, improved genetics, high perching spaces, continuous access to littered floor, and even good human-animal relationships, that have a compounding impact when used together.<sup>5</sup> In essence, the less exposure to stressors, the less likely the hens are to peck at other birds.<sup>6</sup> Sick or injured hens are also more likely to be identified and treated in a timely manner in cage-free systems, reducing prolonged suffering.

Ultimately, cages are inherently incapable of meeting the physical and behavioral needs of laying hens no matter how well it is managed. Cage-free systems, on the other hand, offer the potential for greater health, welfare, and overall quality of life for the birds.

## 2. Industry Landscape

**The production landscape is transitioning rapidly to cage-free due to consumer demand, state legislation, and retailer commitments.** The proportion of cage-free hens has more than tripled since 2016, up from 10% of the nation’s total egg-laying flock to over 38% of the total laying flock today.<sup>7</sup> Ten states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Michigan—have already banned the production and/or sale of eggs from caged systems. In a recent survey of 31 egg producers, almost all of them felt there will be ample cage-free egg supply to meet demand in 2025, and none of them expected long-term supply shortages.<sup>8</sup> In another survey, 37 producers estimated that over two-thirds of their own hens will be housed in cage-free or free-range systems by 2030.<sup>9</sup> Cal-Maine, the largest retail egg producer in the nation and a company with multiple cage-free operations, is investing

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<sup>5</sup> See S.L. Lambton et. al. (2013) *A bespoke management package can reduce levels of injurious pecking in loose-housed laying hen flocks*. *Veterinary Record* 172:16. [A bespoke management package can reduce levels of injurious pecking in loose-housed laying hen flocks - Lambton - 2013 - Veterinary Record - Wiley Online Library](#)

<sup>6</sup> See Mullan, S. M., Szmargd, C., Wrathall, J. H. M., Cooper, M., Jamieson, J., Bond, A., ... Main, D. (2016). *Animal welfare initiatives improve feather cover of cage-free laying hens in the UK*. *Animal Welfare*, 25(2), 243-253. DOI: 10.7120/09627286.25.2.243. [Animal welfare initiatives improve feather cover of cage-free lay...: Ingenta Connect](#)

<sup>7</sup> Data compiled from “Shell Eggs: Monthly USDA Cage-Free Shell Egg Reports” and “Chickens and Eggs Reports” from the USDA Economics Statistics, and Market Information System

<sup>8</sup> Terrence O’Keefe (2024). US cage-free egg pledges coming due, chaos not expected. *WattPoultry EggIndustry D. Egg Industry - January 2024 - US cage-free egg pledges coming due, chaos not expected (eggindustry-digital.com)*

<sup>9</sup> O’Keefe, T. (2021). 2021 Survey: Cage-free conversions slowing down. *WATTPoultry*.

<https://www.wattagnet.com/egg/egg-production/article/15532604/2021-survey-cage-free-conversions-fewer-total-hens>

another \$165 million to convert several more barns to cage-free housing through 2025 for over 3.2 million hens.<sup>10</sup> Other companies are going even further—one company in Indiana recently began selling organic, cage-free eggs that are also the nation's first certified carbon-neutral eggs, gaining a competitive edge by catering to eco-conscious consumers.<sup>11</sup> With the industry continuing to evolve to meet consumers' animal welfare and sustainability expectations, egg producers in Maryland and elsewhere will need to be cage-free soon to remain competitive in the marketplace.

Cage-free egg sourcing has also become a pillar of corporate social responsibility. Major retailers, including Target and Costco, have committed to no longer selling eggs from hens in caged systems by 2025. Whole Foods has been exclusively selling cage-free eggs since 2004, and more recently, Sprouts Market achieved their 100% cage-free commitment ahead of schedule and are now also sourcing 65% of those eggs from free-range or pasture raised systems, which are considered even higher welfare than cage-free. Dozens of other food manufacturers, restaurants, and hospitality services, including McDonald's, Subway, Barilla, Danone, Sodexo, and Disney, have either achieved, or made significant progress toward achieving, 100% cage-free sourcing, adding more incentive for the industry to increase cage-free production.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this progress, the United States is far behind Europe regarding farmed animal welfare standards, demonstrating that much more can be done. Battery cages for laying hens have been banned in the European Union since 2012. In addition, the European Commission made a landmark decision in June 2021 to phase out the use of all cages in animal farming by 2027. Currently, over half of the EU's egg-laying flock is cage-free compared to the US's 38%.<sup>13</sup> Europe's progress proves that not only is farmed animal welfare a growing concern among consumers but that higher welfare systems are achievable and should be expected to become the standard by the end of the decade.

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<sup>10</sup> See Cal-Maine (2022). Cal-Maine Foods Reports Record Fiscal Fourth Quarter and Fiscal Year 2022 Results; Announces Quarterly Cash Dividend. <https://calmainefoods.gcs-web.com/node/12891/pdf>

<sup>11</sup> See Kipster (2022). World's first carbon-neutral eggs drop in U.S. <https://www.kipster.farm/blog/worlds-first-carbon-neutral-eggs-drop-in-us>

<sup>12</sup> EggTrack. Compassion in World Farming. <https://www.eggtrack.com/en/>

<sup>13</sup> EggTrack. Compassion in World Farming. [https://www.ciwf.org.uk/media/7452386/eggtrack-2022-report.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*159kyq6\\*\\_ga\\*MTMzNDEzNDExMS4xNzA1Njc5NTky\\*\\_ga\\_RMC05PGGT7\\*MTcwNTY3OTU5MS4xLjAuMTcwNTY3OTU5OS41NS4wLjA](https://www.ciwf.org.uk/media/7452386/eggtrack-2022-report.pdf?_gl=1*159kyq6*_ga*MTMzNDEzNDExMS4xNzA1Njc5NTky*_ga_RMC05PGGT7*MTcwNTY3OTU5MS4xLjAuMTcwNTY3OTU5OS41NS4wLjA).

### 3. Public Health

#### **Higher welfare systems can reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses and zoonotic diseases.**

Birds in higher welfare systems are more likely to have stronger immune systems, which in turn protects human health. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies have acknowledged this by committing to One Health, a philosophy that recognizes the inextricable links between the health of people, animals, and the environment and aims to optimize health outcomes for all three using a transdisciplinary approach.<sup>14</sup> A recent report found strong links between low animal welfare—exacerbated by animal crowding, compromised hygiene, and high animal stress levels—and high zoonotic risk for humans. The report further advises halting the expansion of intensive farming to protect human health.<sup>15</sup> CIWF’s review of existing research concludes that higher welfare production systems—including cage-free—are likely to lower the risk of Salmonella from infection within hens' reproductive tract or fecal contamination of eggs.<sup>16</sup> Salmonella causes over 1.3 million illnesses and 420 deaths in the United States each year.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, higher welfare systems can lower the risk of animal-to-human transmission of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), improving worker safety. While the current risk of HPAI to public health is low, the CDC is closely monitoring the situation in case the virus changes.<sup>18</sup> The CDC estimates that 75% of new or emerging infectious diseases come from animals.<sup>19</sup> The risk of disease transmission is greater when humans come into close contact with animals kept in crowded and stressful conditions. Cage-free systems can not only prevent stress-related

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<sup>14</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Federal One Health Coordination.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/what-we-do/federal-coordination.html>

<sup>15</sup> J. Mace and A. Knight (2023). Influenza risks arising from mixed intensive pig and poultry farms, with a spotlight on the United Kingdom. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*. Vol. 10. DOI 10.3389/fvets.2023.1310303.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2023.1310303>

<sup>16</sup> Zoonotic Diseases, Human Health, and Farm Animal Welfare. *Compassion in World Farming*.  
<https://www.ciwf.org.uk/research/animal-diseases/zoonotic-diseases/>

<sup>17</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Salmonella: Information for Healthcare Professionals and Laboratories.

<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/general/technical.html#:~:text=Information%20for%20Healthcare%20Professional%20and%20Laboratories%201%20Estimates,...%204%20Risk%20Factors%20...%205%20Outbreaks%20>

<sup>18</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Current U.S. Bird Flu Situation in Humans.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/inhumans.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Zoonotic Diseases. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html>

immunosuppression but also enable workers to identify sick hens more easily, which can help identify and contain diseases that pose public health risks earlier, especially those that can present symptoms in birds such as avian influenza.

Therefore, preventing immunosuppression caused by chronic stress in egg-laying hens can improve public health outcomes and prevent future disease outbreaks.

#### 4. Market Opportunity

##### **SB0193 creates a critical market opportunity for local and smallholder farmers.**

Much of the Maryland's egg supply is imported from Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and other states.<sup>20</sup> Many of the egg companies in these states are large corporations that currently mostly use caged systems, using their market power and economies of scale to push small and local farmers out of the Maryland market. Only ten companies, who operate mainly in the Midwest, house more than half of the nation's egg-laying hens.<sup>21</sup> Thus, SB0193 creates a window of opportunity for smaller and local producers—who are often either already cage-free or nimbler than large companies to convert to cage-free—to fulfill retailer contracts previously held by large, out-of-state conglomerates, boosting Maryland's rural economy and keeping dollars local.

The cost considerations regarding cage-free eggs are negligible for retailers and consumers and existing cage-free producers, and producers who transition from caged to cage-free systems will likely see positive returns on investment. Evidence suggests that cage-free sales laws have little impact on the price of eggs, posing little concern to Maryland retailers and consumers. CIWF analyzed egg prices in California before and after their cage-free law went into effect and found that egg prices returned to normal in less than two months.

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<sup>20</sup> USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (2023). Chickens and Eggs 2022 Summary (February 2023). Page 6. <https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/1v53jw96n/8g84p051j/v692vk48g/ckegan23.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Dawson, M. (2024). EggIndustry: The largest US egg-producing companies of 2024. *WATTPoultry*. [https://www.eggindustry-digital.com/eggindustry/library/item/january\\_2024/4160285/?oly\\_enc\\_id=1127J3620990E0F](https://www.eggindustry-digital.com/eggindustry/library/item/january_2024/4160285/?oly_enc_id=1127J3620990E0F)



CIWF has assisted over one thousand producers and retailers worldwide transition to higher welfare standards, and our team would be happy to assist Maryland's food businesses to ensure a smooth changeover to cage-free.

Thank you for considering this important bill and for the opportunity to testify. We hope to see the committee support SB0193 to advance a safer and more ethical future.

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Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your attention to this issue. Please feel free to contact Allie Molinaro, Campaigns Manager of CIWF ([Allison.Molinaro@ciwf.org](mailto:Allison.Molinaro@ciwf.org)) with any questions.

**SB0193\_Support\_HumaneSocietyVetMedAssn.pdf**

Uploaded by: Barbara Hodges

Position: FAV



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
VETERINARY MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION.**

January 22, 2024

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Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: VETERINARY SUPPORT for SB193**

Dear Chair Brian Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl Kagen, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, I am writing to convey our strong organizational support for SB193, legislation that would phase out the cruel cage-confinement of egg-laying hens.

It is commonsense that animals be allowed to engage in basic movements and postural adjustments. This intuitive perspective is validated by an abundance of scientific evidence demonstrating that intensive confinement systems (like the battery cages used in some egg facilities) are detrimental to the physical and psychological welfare of farm animals and that these systems create public health concerns.

To cite just one notable example, the prestigious Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production—a panel of experts including a former veterinary school dean and a Secretary of the USDA—concluded “...that the most intensive confinement systems, such as . . . battery cages for poultry...prevent the animal from a normal range of movement and constitute inhumane treatment.” The Commission recommended a phase-out of the most intensive and inhumane production practices, including battery cages for egg-laying hens.

Modern replacements for this extreme confinement method already exist, are in widespread commercial use, and are economically viable. Cage-free systems allow birds to move freely through their environment and to engage in natural behaviors—such as dust-bathing, nesting, and perching—which are thwarted by cage confinement.



HUMANE SOCIETY  
VETERINARY MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION.

We respectfully encourage the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to support SB193 to protect egg-laying hens by eliminating the use of inhumane cage confinement in the state and requiring that all eggs sold in Maryland come from cage-free hens. SB193—a commonsense reform measure—will ensure a more humane, safer, and sustainable food system.

Sincerely,

*Carrie B. Waters*

Carrie Waters, DVM, PhD, JD, DACVIM  
HSVMA Maryland State Representative



**SB0193\_Confinement\_of\_Hens\_MLC\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**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.

**FriendsoftheEarth\_ChloeWaterman\_FAV\_SB193.pdf**

Uploaded by: Chloe Waterman

Position: FAV



Chloe Waterman  
Sr. Program Manager, Climate-Friendly Food Campaign  
Friends of the Earth  
1101 15<sup>th</sup> St NW, Washington DC 20005

January 23, 2024

Testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 193** – Prohibition on Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Friends of the Earth U.S. and our more than 20,000 members and supporters in Maryland, we respectfully ask for your support of SB 193, which addresses the extreme confinement of farm animals by ensuring cage-free conditions. Not only will this create more humane living conditions for these animals, it will also help facilitate a more sustainable farming system.

Shifting to cage-free systems where animals have more space is a critical step away from the factory farming model that is contributing to the climate crisis, pollution, foodborne illness, unsafe communities and working conditions, and inhumane treatment of animals. Factory farms that confine millions of animals inside windowless warehouses produce a massive amount of waste that pollutes our land, water and air.

Communities living near factory farms on the Eastern Shore often experience noxious smells, deal with unsafe drinking water, and suffer from respiratory health impacts. Typically – including here in Maryland – it's lower-income families and communities of color that are harmed the most.

Shifting to cage-free systems has long been favored by organizations supporting family farms, sustainability, and rural communities. Many states have already passed similar laws; SB 193 would continue that momentum. We hope Maryland will pass SB 193 into law and further create a safer, more sustainable food system.

Thank you for your consideration of our position, and we respectfully urge a favorable report.

# **Maryland cage-free bill testimony - 1.2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Claudia Lifton

Position: FAV



8033 Sunset Blvd, Ste 864  
Los Angeles, CA 90046  
☎ 866-632-6446  
[MercyForAnimals.org](https://www.MercyForAnimals.org)

January 18, 2024

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401 - 1991

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

Mercy For Animals, a nonprofit organization with approximately 6,000 Maryland supporters dedicated to creating a more just and sustainable food system, commends the Maryland legislature for their consideration of SB193 and writes in support of this bill. The adoption of this anti-confinement legislation that allows egg-laying hens space to exhibit natural behaviors will position Maryland as a leader in animal welfare while also protecting consumer safety, and supporting local, family farmers who have made the switch to more humane farming methods.

### ***Joining States Leading the Fight on Farm Animal Welfare***

If enacted, Maryland would join states like California, Washington, Michigan, Oregon, and Massachusetts in creating a more compassionate food system for egg-laying hens, consumers, and family farms.

### ***Consumer Safety***

Confining egg-laying hens in cages puts Maryland's families at risk. Over eighteen studies have found that salmonella is more prevalent in cage egg production than in cage-free. One of the most comprehensive studies analyzing the health implications of cage versus cage-free egg facilities revealed that the risk of salmonella contamination was 25-times greater in facilities that confined hens to cages.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Supporting Family Farms***

Science confirms what common sense already tells us: that locking an animal in a cage so small she can barely move, causes her to suffer greatly. It's morally wrong, and numerous successful Maryland family farms that eschew such cruelty have shown that it's completely unnecessary. The cage-free conditions outlined in SB193 support responsible local farmers who are making the switch to more humane farming methods.

Mercy for Animals supports this important step forward in animal welfare, public health, and family farming. As such, we respectfully urge you to support SB193.

Sincerely,  
Mercy For Animals

Alex Cerussi  
Senior State Policy Manager  
[alexc@mercyforanimals.org](mailto:alexc@mercyforanimals.org)  
631.479.9005

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Task Force on Zoonoses Data Collection on the Analysis of the baseline study on the prevalence of Salmonella in holdings of laying hen flocks of Gallus gallus, The EFSA Journal (2007) 97

# **SB193\_Support\_ConorLamkin.pdf**

Uploaded by: Conor Lamkin

Position: FAV



Bill: SB 193

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Position: Support

Date: January 22, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of our Maryland supporters, The Humane League (THL) supports SB 193, introduced by Senator Karen Lewis Young, which would require, after a phase-in period, that all eggs produced or sold within the state come from cage-free operations. This bill aligns with a growing trend seen in other states, enjoying bipartisan support for its commitment to improving the well-being of egg-laying hens. With industry-written standards and guidelines, SB 193 ensures a responsible transition to cage-free systems, allowing hens to engage in natural behaviors. Not only does SB193 contribute to heightened animal welfare, but it also addresses critical concerns by reducing food safety risks associated with confined conditions. By keeping egg costs down, it makes safe and humane eggs accessible to all Marylanders. Supporting SB 193 is a crucial step toward fostering a more ethical and sustainable approach to egg production in Maryland. THL urges committee members to lend their support to SB 193.

## **Ensuring Safer, More Affordable, and Humane Egg Production for Marylanders**

Marylanders deserve eggs that are produced in a safer, more affordable, and humane manner. The growing public opposition to confining farm animals in extremely restrictive cages makes it evident that the future of egg production is moving towards cage-free systems. SB 193 would ensure that all eggs produced or sold in Maryland come from cage-free operations adhering to industry guidelines. This proposed bill aims to enhance food safety, promote animal welfare, and establish a business-friendly regulatory framework.

## **Bipartisan Support for Passing Similar Legislation**

Maryland's cage-free egg bill aligns with 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.

## **Industry-Written Standards**

The industry-written standards outlined in SB 193 for cage-free systems mandate at least 1 square foot for birds in aviary-style facilities and at least 1.5 square feet for birds in floor systems. This legislation would enable Maryland's more than 2 million egg-laying hens to engage in important natural behaviors such as flapping their wings, walking, perching, dustbathing, and laying eggs in nest boxes, aligning with guidelines from the United Egg Producers.

## **Reduction of Food Safety Risks**

SB 193 not only increases animal welfare but also reduces food safety risks. The confinement of millions of hens in the United States egg industry in small, barren cages has been associated with higher rates of salmonella. Cage-free systems, as evidence indicates, can help mitigate these risks.

## **Keeps Costs Down**

Moreover, the focus of this bill solely on eggs keeps costs down and does not impact other sectors of animal agriculture. The production cost differential between cage and cage-free housing systems is minimal, estimated to be less than a couple of pennies per egg. As cage-free eggs become more commonplace, retail markup is expected to decline, presenting consumers with affordable options.

## **Commercial Egg-Buyers Have Already Transitioned to Cage-Free Eggs**

The demand for change is evident among commercial egg-buyers, with major companies like Target, Costco, McDonald's, Burger King, and many others already using or transitioning to 100% cage-free eggs. The deadline for implementing SB 193 is January 1, 2026 and nearly all of these companies will have gone cage-free by that date.

**SB193\_FAVORABLE\_AmericansForFamilyFarmers.pdf**

Uploaded by: Donna Krudwig

Position: FAV

January 22, 2024

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



Dear members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

We are Maryland family farmers writing in strong support of SB193, which will provide more humane eggs for Marylanders. This measure would provide spatial standards for egg-laying hens in our state, which give the birds enough room to move and express natural behaviors. It would also ensure that eggs sold in our state come from facilities that are held to these same standards. On some industrial production facilities, egg-laying hens are confined in cages so small they're rendered virtually immobile for their whole lives. This confinement can undercut responsible family farmers who use more humane means of raising animals. Moreover, workers at these corporate facilities often report that witnessing such cruel conditions takes an emotional toll on them.

SB193 is a commonsense bill that's in line with how animals ought to be treated. We are concerned about animal welfare, the viability of family farms and the reputation of Maryland agriculture, and therefore kindly urge your support of SB193.

Sincerely,

Honey Moon Farm, Accident

Diehl's Produce, Annapolis

Hollywood Farm, Annapolis

Olmo Bros Nursery & Farm, Annapolis

Tanglewood Sheep and Goat Farm, Ashton

Hybridoma Organic Fruit Farm, Baldwin

Butterbee Farm, Baltimore

J's Farm Market, Bel Air

Serenity Farm, Benedict

Goat Plum Tree Farm, Berlin

Belle Prairie Farm, Big Pool

Foxhound Farm, Bishopville

Contentment Farm, Boonsboro

Cherry Glen Farm, Boyds

Windy Way Farm, Boyds

Peaceful Acres Organic Free Range Farm,  
Brandywine

Bella Vita Farm, Brookeville

DoDo Farms, Brookeville

Victory Chapel Family Farms, Bryans Road

Anchorage Farm, Centreville

Land's End Farm, Centreville

Where Pigs Fly Farm, Centreville

Redman Farms, Chestertown

Oksana's Produce, Chestertown

Reiner Farm, Cheverly

Natural Nick's Produce LLC, Chillum Gardens

The Hydrofarm Inc., Churchville

Rebecca's Garden, Columbia

Rumbleway Farm, Conowingo

Bobs Organic Farm, Cordova

Environmental Evergreens, Darlington

Chicken of the Woods Permaculture Farm,  
Darnestown

**SB193: FAVORABLE**

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Query Mill Farm, Darnestown	R & H Farms, Lexington Park
Mt Airy U-Pick Farm, Davidsonville	Berry Daze Farm, Lothian
P & J Tree Farm, Delmar	Buppert's Farm, Marriottsville
Amaranth Acres, Dickerson	Scarborough Farm, Mechanicsville
Monocacy Mills, Dickerson	Chocolates and Tomatoes Farm, Middletown
One Acre Farm, Dickerson	Harley Farm, Middletown
A. H. Herb'n Craft Farm, Easton	Millersville Hens, Millersville
Cottingham Farm, Easton	Karma Farm, Monkton
Olney Farm, Elkridge	Maryland Microgreens, Monrovia
Eder Farm, Elkton	Elk Run Winery, Mount Airy
Stone Wall Angus LLC, Fairplay	Frog Hollow Homestead, Myersville
Belvedere Farm, Fallston	Shepherds Manor Creamery, New Windsor
Harford Vineyard & Winery, Forest Hill	Haley Farm, Oakland
Three Oaks Farm, Forest Hill	The Farm at Glen Mary, Park Hall
Ambling Brook Farm, Frederick	Grandma's Farm, Pleasant Valley
Sycamore Spring Farm, Frederick	Grateful Gardeners, Poolesville
Oak Spring Farm, Freeland	Plow and Stars Farm, Poolesville
Heartwood Farm, Friendsville	Scrivener's Farm, Prince Frederick
Two Story Chimney Ciderworks, Gaithersburg	Brightman Farm, Princess Anne
Hideaway Farm, Gambrells	Crooked Creek Farm, Pylesville
Prigel Family Creamery, Glen Arm	Piece of Heaven Farm, Reisterstown
Fat & Happy Farms, Grasonville	Farm To Fork Fresh Farm, Ridgely
Kinohi Poultry, Greensboro	Brewers Hideaway Farm, Rising Sun
The Blue Truck Homestead, Hagerstown	Windy Ridge Acres, Rocky Ridge
Third Way Farm, Havre de Grace	Maple Vale Farm, Rohrersville
Fox Briar Farm, Hurlock	growingSOUL, Sandy Spring
Red Top Farm, Jarrettsville	Willow Oak Flower & Herb Farm, Severn
Castle Hill Farm, Jefferson	Springfield Farm, Sparks
Fox Haven Organic Farm, Jefferson	Carriage House Farms, Stevenson
Blue-Ridge Farm, Keedysville	Prosperity Acres, Sunderland
Lonesome Pine Farms, Knoxville	Ritter Farm, Sykesville
Hancock Farm, La Plata	Crossroads Multi-Farm CSA, Takoma Park
Gorman Farm, Laurel	Fiddler's Green Farm, Taneytown
Our Graystone Farm, Laytonsville	Ridgeton Farms, Taylors Island
Part Green Hill Farm, Leonardtown	Utica Bridge Farms, LLC, Thurmont

**SB193: FAVORABLE**

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Gingersnap Farm, Trappe

Flying Pigs Farm, Union Bridge

Crazy Days Family Farm, Union Bridge

Deep Roots Farm, Upper Marlboro

Heron There Farm, Upper Marlboro

Owl's Nest Farm, Upper Marlboro

Chestnut Creek Farm, Westminster

Faithful Friends farm, Westminster

Lucky Lane Farm, White Hall

Star Bright Farm, White Hall

Breezy Willow Farm, Woodbine

Heron's Meadow Farm, Woodbine

Stewart Farms, Woodbine

Withers Wool, Woodbine

Moon Valley Farm, Woodsboro

# **SB193 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ferrell Santacroce

Position: FAV

1/22/2024

Good Afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the committee -

My name is Ferrell Santacroce, I live in Salisbury, Maryland. I'm here today to ask that you support a free range standard of care that actually requires more mobility for hens than the cage-free requirements considered in this bill.

I work for a large chicken egg and meat production company on the Eastern Shore. My typical day starts at 4am, managing 4 houses. These houses are approximately 380 feet, a little longer than a football field. Each house has 30,000 birds. I'm responsible for maintaining the temperature, air quality, feed management and collection. Something that surprises a lot of people when they enter the houses is that it doesn't really smell bad. The type of bedding is somewhat self-cleaning and bedding is changed out frequently. Unfortunately, any type of animal management includes some mortality. From my experience with battery cage and free range production, there is less mortality from the birds self mutilating, parasite infections with free range egg production.

Occasionally a small section of the house will get an upper respiratory infection. We don't use antibiotics or steroids, so lavender and eucalyptus are pumped into the air for relief. The eggs collected are on raised platforms. What's on the outer shell is really no dirtier than dirt on vegetables from your garden. All the houses are inspected weekly from certified inspectors. That inspection includes air quality, sanitation, feed/diet quality and there are big points for the overall comfort and health of the birds. I have never witnessed the same kind of care required for caged birds. I have witnessed far more suffering in caged hens than free range.

Thank you for listening today and I respectfully ask the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee to favor humane and sustainable egg production and support SB193.



# **SB 193\_Favorable\_Jareb Gleckel.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jareb Gleckel

Position: FAV

Bill: SB 193  
Committee: Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee  
Position: Favorable  
Date: January 22, 2024

My name is Jareb Gleckel, and I am a Staff Attorney for Animal Outlook (AO), a nonprofit animal protection organization with a home base here in Maryland. I am testifying in support of SB 193 for many of the same reasons you will hear others present — battery cages are inhumane to animals and also present food safety and public health risks. What I believe I can uniquely offer today is a specific factual look at the realities of battery cage production, including here in Maryland.

AO has conducted multiple investigations of battery egg facilities in Maryland.

- In 2001, numerous occasions in 2002, 2003, and then again in 2005, AO entered Maryland battery cage egg facilities where hundreds of thousands of birds are warehoused. AO documented the following repeatedly across these investigations:
  - Hens crowded in barren wire cages, restricting even simple movements
  - Animals in the lower rows of cages forced to live in the excrement of birds above them
  - Severe and widespread feather loss
  - Birds with severe and untreated illness and injuries deprived of veterinary care, including multiple disfiguring swollen and infected eyes.
  - Birds trapped in the bars of their cages or under other birds, immobilized and unable to access food or water
  - Widespread dead birds, with live birds forced to live in cages with their decomposing cage mates

While I have highlighted the Maryland egg industry, AO's investigations of other battery cage egg facilities reveal almost identical conditions and issues.

- In 2005, 2007, and 2009, AO investigated battery egg facilities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Minnesota, and documented:
  - Once again, the same kind of overcrowding in cages, severely decomposed birds with live birds in cages, sick and injured birds with no veterinary care, feces landing on animals, stuck birds with no access to food and water, and escaped or abandoned birds in the manure pits or aisles.

- Each worker being responsible for between 125,000 and 225,000 birds, with one worker saying they could spend no more than an hour per house looking for dead birds

When it comes to battery cages, cruelty and suffering is the rule, not the exception.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. V. Cieckel", written in a cursive style.

Jareb Cieckel

Staff Attorney

P: 516.232.5167

Appendix: Select Photos



Cecilton, MD: Bird is seen with a severely swollen and infected eye



Cecilton, MD: birds crowded in a battery cage with severe feather loss

# **Center for Food Safety Statement.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



### **Center for Food Safety statement on the use of cages in egg production**

The Center for Food Safety supports legislation and corporate initiatives to end the confinement of egg-laying hens in cages. Decades of research have clearly shown that cage confinement increases the risk of *Salmonella* contamination compared to cage-free production. Cooking is not a guarantee to kill *Salmonella* since it can survive a variety of cooking methods. The fact remains that in terms of potential *Salmonella* contamination, eggs from caged hens are simply more dangerous than their cage-free counterparts.

Cage-free requirements are an important way for lawmakers and companies to protect the health of consumers from the significant public health threat of cage eggs. Since there is a strong connection between cages and pathogen contamination, adopting laws and corporate policies to end the caging of egg-laying hens results in safer food for families.

**WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE:** 518 C Street, NE, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20002, T (202) 547-9359, F (202) 547-9429

**CALIFORNIA OFFICE:** 303 Sacramento St, 2nd floor, San Francisco, CA 94111, T (415) 826-2770, F (415) 826-0507

**PACIFIC NORTHWEST OFFICE:** 2009 NE Alberta St, Suite 207, Portland, OR 97211, T (971) 271-7372

# **Factsheet-MarylandCage-FreeEggBill2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV

# Support cage-free legislation

Sponsored by Senator Lewis Young and Delegate Terrasa



## Marylanders deserve safer, affordable, more humane eggs

Due to enormous public opposition to confining farm animals in ultrarestrictive cages, it's now clear that the future of egg production is cage-free. Legislation to be introduced by Sen. Karen Lewis Young and Del. Jennifer Terrasa would ensure that after a phase-in period, eggs produced or sold in Maryland come from cage-free operations that adhere to the egg industry's own guidelines. This bill will promote food safety, advance animal welfare and provide a business-friendly regulatory scheme.

## Increases animal welfare and lowers food safety risks

Millions of hens in the United States egg industry are still confined in barren cages so small they can't even flap their wings. These conditions are not only cruel for the birds, but cage systems have been associated with higher rates of salmonella, a disease that can be deadly—especially in young children and the elderly. Evidence indicates that cage-free systems reduce salmonella risks.

## Focuses solely on eggs and keeps costs down

**This measure does *not* impact any other sector of animal agriculture, such as Perdue or any other broiler chicken producer.** Production cost differential between cage and cage-free housing systems is minimal; it's estimated to be less than one 1 to a couple pennies per egg. Since cage-free eggs will become "commoditized," retail markup will actually **decline** as grocery stores market the cage-free eggs as their "value" egg. Retailers will use these low-priced, cage-free eggs to draw foot traffic, just as they do today with cage eggs.

## Boosts the economy by potentially creating a host of jobs

With a business-friendly regulatory scheme, this bill opens up Maryland for new opportunities for constructing cage-free facilities that would create jobs. This bill could lead to employment for construction workers, electricians, excavators, engineers and farm workers.

## Modest, industry-written standards

The guidelines written in Sen. Lewis Young and Del. Terrasa's bill for cage-free systems require at least 1 square foot for birds in aviary-style facilities, and at least 1.5 square feet for birds in floor systems. Maryland's more than 2 million egg-laying hens would be able to perform important natural behaviors such as flapping their wings, walking, perching, dustbathing and laying eggs in nest boxes. The standards are based on guidelines by the United Egg Producers.

## Demand for change:

### Commercial egg-buyers

This measure codifies where the market is already going. For example: Target, Costco, McDonald's, Burger King, Popeye's, Tim Hortons, Denny's, IHOP, Applebee's, Arby's, Olive Garden, Panera Bread, Taco Bell, Shake Shack, Starbucks, Chipotle, Outback Steakhouse, Sonic Drive-In, The Cheesecake Factory, Nestle, General Mills, Kraft Heinz, Unilever, Mondelez, Conagra Brands and many other companies already use (or are on track to use) 100% cage-free eggs in the U.S. Almost all of these companies are going to get to cage-free before or by the deadline for the bill by Sen. Lewis Young and Del. Terrasa.



# **FAQ Maryland Cage-Free Egg Bill.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV

# Frequently Asked Questions about SB 193/HB 357

## How will SB 193/HB 357 help Marylanders have access to safer, affordable, more humane eggs?

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.

Retailers often charge an artificial premium for a carton of 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 SB 193, 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, this bill will give more access to safer food for Maryland families.

## How will SB 193/ HB 357 impact the cost of eggs?

For shifting to cage-free production, estimates vary between less than one cent to a few pennies per egg. In fact, when McDonald's announced it was going cage-free, it stated it won't raise prices at all. 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, Costco, Unilever, General Mills and Aramark, along with Maryland-based Sodexo and Marriott.

## What are the food safety and public health risks of caging birds?

Extensive research<sup>1</sup> shows that locking hens in cages increases the risk of Salmonella contamination, a bacteria that can be lethal, especially in children and the elderly. Leading consumer advocacy organizations including the Center for Science in the Public Interest and Center for Food Safety have supported cage-free reforms.

## Is SB 193/HB 357 in line with cage-free legislation in other states?

SB193/HB 357 aligns with other states. Over the past several years, red, blue and purple states have passed similar measures, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Michigan, and Massachusetts. Utah and Rhode Island have also passed cage-free egg standards. These measures all garnered strong bipartisan support.

## How is SB 193/HB 357 farmer-friendly?

SB 193/HB 357 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. SB193 is based on these guidelines.

SB 193/HB 357 is farmer-friendly by providing market and regulatory certainty. 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).

## How do cages compare with cage-free facilities?

Welfare aspects of housing systems for hens		
	Barren Battery Cage	Cage-Free Barn/Aviary
Typical space per bird	67 in	144-216 in
Walking	Constrained	Free expression
Running	Not permitted	Free expression
Jumping	Not permitted	Free expression
Flying	Not permitted	Free expression
Perching	Not permitted	Free expression
Exploratory behavior	Not permitted	Free expression
Dustbathing	Not permitted	Free expression
Foraging	Not permitted	Free expression
Nesting	Not permitted	Free expression
Exercise	Not permitted	Free expression
Group size	Smallest	Large
Air quality	Variable and dependent on management	Variable and dependent on management
Bone strength	Weak	Strong
Bone fractures	Less common during laying, but more common when removed from cages at depopulation	Common during the laying period, but less common during depopulation
Fatty liver hemorrhagic syndrome	More common	Less common
Fear	More fearful	Less fearful
Trapping injury	More potential	Less potential
Mortality	Variable and dependent on strain and beak trimming status	Variable and dependent on strain and beak trimming status

\*Chart compiled by the Humane Society's lead scientist

<sup>1</sup> See: D. R. Jones, J. Guard, R. K. Gast, R. J. Buhr, P. J. Fedorka-Cray, Z. Abdo, J. R. Plumblee, D. V. Bourassa, N. A. Cox, L. L. Rigsby, C. I. Robison, P. Regmi, and D. M. Karcher. 2016. Influence of commercial laying hen housing systems on the incidence and identification of Salmonella and Campylobacter. Poultry Science 95:1116-1124; De Vylder, J., S. Van Hoorebeke, R. Ducatelle, F. Pasmans, F. Haesebrouck, J. Dewulf, and F. Van Immerseel. 2009. Effect of the housing system on shedding and colonization of gut and internal organs of laying hens with Salmonella Enteritidis. Poult. Sci. 88:2491-2495; Denagamage, Thomas; Bhushan Jayarao, Paul Patterson, Eva Wallner-Pendleton, and Subhashinie Kariyawasam. 2015. Risk factors associated with salmonella in laying hen farms: systematic review of observational studies. Avian Diseases 59(2):291-302.

# **Maryland Voters Support Cage-Free Eggs.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV

## Methodology

*From February 6th to 16th, YouGov Blue surveyed 531 registered Maryland voters on behalf of the Humane Society of the United States via the YouGov web panel. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race, education, Census region, and 2020 Presidential vote choice. Respondents were selected from YouGov's panel to be representative of registered voters.*

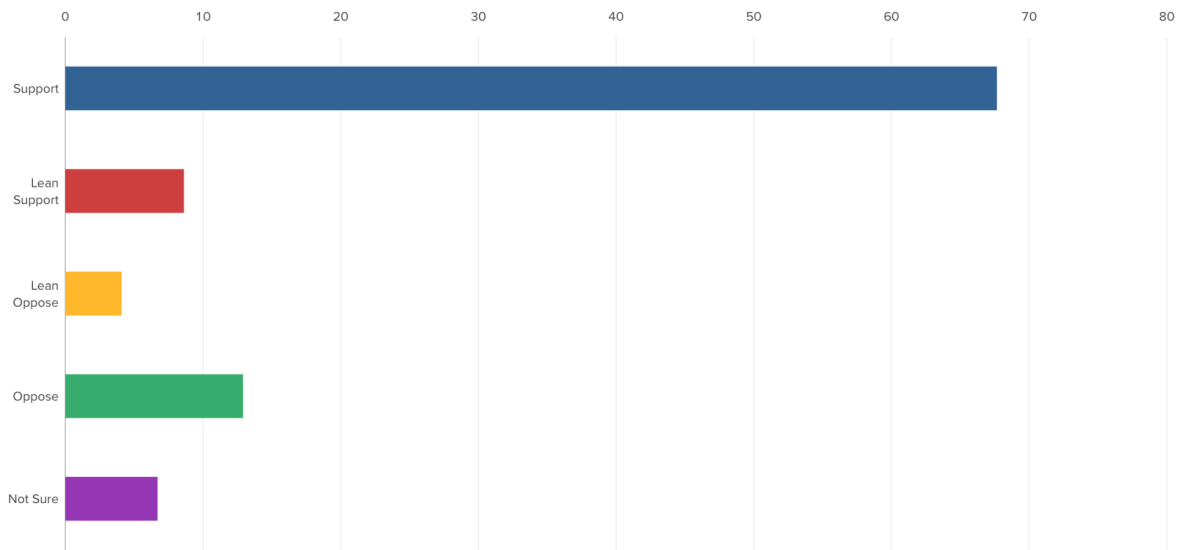
## Toplines

- Seventy-six percent of Maryland voters support their legislators voting in favor of the cage-free egg legislation currently being considered by the Maryland legislature while only 17 percent oppose the legislation.
- Seventy-eight percent of voters support the Governor signing cage-free egg legislation if it passes the legislature, with 16 percent opposed.
- The cage-free egg legislation has strong support from voters across parties, with 84 percent of Democrats, 60 percent of Republicans and 71 percent of Independents in support of their legislator voting in favor of the proposal. Eighty-six percent of Democrats, 61 percent of Republicans and 75 percent of Independents support the Governor signing the legislation if the legislature passes it.
- After hearing arguments for and against the cage-free egg proposal, support remains strong, with 72 percent in support and 20 percent opposed to passage in the legislature and 77 percent in support of the Governor signing the legislation and 17 percent opposed.

## Cage-Free Egg Proposal Enjoys Strong Support From Voters

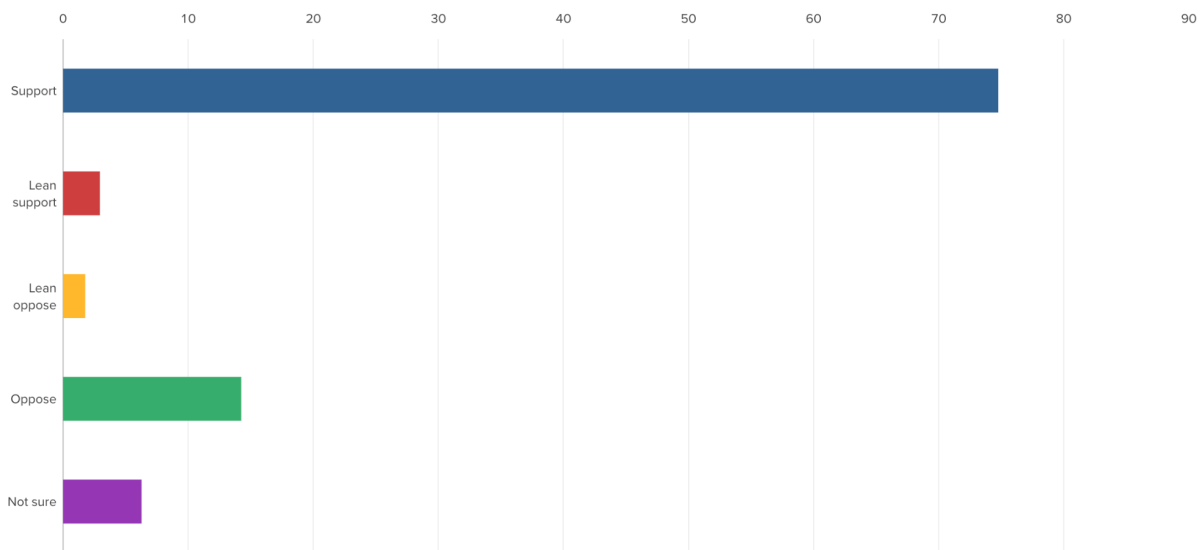
We find strong support among Maryland voters for the cage-free egg legislation. **Seventy-six percent of Maryland voters support cage-free egg legislation, with 17 percent opposed.** In our initial ask, 68 percent of Maryland voters want their legislator to vote in favor of the legislation, while 13 percent want their legislator to vote against it. The other 19 percent are undecided, but among those voters, the plurality (44%) lean towards the legislation, with only 22 percent leaning against (leading to the final seventy-six, 17 percent split).

Do you support or oppose your legislator voting for cage-free egg legislation?



An even larger share of Maryland voters support the Governor signing the legislation into law if it passes the legislature. Seventy-eight percent of voters support the Governor signing cage-free egg legislation if it passes the legislature, with 16 percent opposed. On initial ask, 75 percent of voters supported the Governor signing the law and 14 percent were opposed, among the 11 percent unsure, 26 percent leaned towards signing the law and 18 percent leaned against. The rest chose not to lean in any direction.

Do you support or oppose the Governor signing cage-free egg legislation?



## **Cage-Free Egg Proposal Is Robust To Message Test**

These results remain robust even when voters hear arguments for and against the policy. Two sets of arguments were tested, both available in the footnotes.<sup>1</sup> After hearing one of two message batteries<sup>2</sup> 72 percent of Maryland voters support their legislator voting for the legislation; 20 percent opposed and the rest were undecided. After hearing the same arguments, 77 percent support the Governor signing the law, compared with only 17 percent opposed.

### **Conclusion**

The cage-free egg proposal currently being considered by the Maryland legislature enjoys strong support, even after voters hear arguments for and against the proposal.

---

<sup>1</sup>**SPLIT 1:** Opponents of this legislation say it will increase the cost of eggs and destroy well-paying jobs in the egg industry. Supporters say that the current conditions in hen houses are cruel and pose food safety risk, endangering the health of customers.

**SPLIT 2:** Opponents of this legislation say it will increase the cost of eggs and destroy well-paying jobs in the egg industry. Supporters say that similar legislation has passed in nearly a dozen states without having a negative impact on customers.

<sup>2</sup> The differences between the two messages are small and primarily affect the percent in support, rather than opposed.

**SB193\_HSUS\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

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humanesociety.org

January 23, 2024

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

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*Vice Chair*

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### **RE: Strong support for SB 193**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and members of the committee:

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), on behalf of our thousands of supporters across Maryland, thank Senator Lewis Young for introducing SB193. Eggs in Maryland should be safer, more affordable and more humanely produced. SB193 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.

SB193 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.

Currently, retailers often charge a premium for a dozen 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 SB193, 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, SB193 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.





SB193 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, SB193 is farmer-friendly by providing market and regulatory certainty. The bill contains the egg industry's own cage-free standards. The United Egg Producers' commonsense guidelines on cage-free systems allow hens to perform important natural behaviors like extending their wings, walking, perching, dustbathing and laying eggs in nest boxes. SB193 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 SB193 fits perfectly with that tradition. SB193 will restrict conduct within the state that is contrary to ethical norms in Maryland—conduct that facilitates animal cruelty is bad for the public good in our state, and we expect better of ourselves and our neighbors.

We do request a few technical amendments to clarify the following provisions of the bill, and will work with our sponsors and the amendment office to provide these for the committee:

- The exemption language for small producers, moving it from the definition section to the main body of the bill;
- The definition of sale to make it clear it occurs where the buyer takes possession of the eggs;
- The definition of business operator, to make it clear that it includes all sellers of eggs including retailers, wholesalers, distributors, and others, to ensure that the sales ban is even-handed and applies no matter where the eggs were produced.
- We are also happy to amend the penalty provisions to be a lower, tiered amount.

It is also important to stress that the fiscal note, as drafted, demonstrates a degree of confusion about how the inspection process will occur. Most cage-free eggs are already certified by the United Egg Producers, and in states where this law has taken effect – such as California – the agriculture agency often utilizes that existing inspection and certification process, without having to hire the staff to manage the inspections directly. The legislation already allows the MDA to use third party inspectors, but we are happy to discuss clarifying language if needed to reassure the Department that they will not need four new staff to implement this bill.

For the foregoing reasons, we kindly urge you to vote yes on SB193.

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

**MD VFA\_FAV\_SB193.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FAV



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411  
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

January 23, 2024

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 193 - 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 193.

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 193 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.

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 193 and ask the committee for a favorable report.

**SB0193\_Favorable\_Lorraine\_Docherty.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lorraine Docherty

Position: FAV



January 23, 2024

***Education, Energy and the Environment Committee***

**SB0193**

***Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions***

**FAVORABLE**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Lorraine Docherty, US Philanthropy Manager at Compassion in World Farming. I represent myself, as a Maryland resident, Compassion in World Farming, and our Maryland supporters in strong support of SB0193. CIWF aims to transform our global food system to benefit farmers, animals, citizens, and the environment. SB0193 is crucial for four reasons:

**1. Animal Welfare:** Just like dogs, cats, and other animals, laying hens need exercise and must perform certain behaviors, like scratching, dustbathing, and nesting, for good health. Battery cages cause immense suffering, restricting natural behaviors and leading to frustration and health issues like feather loss and osteoporosis. In contrast, cage-free systems with enrichments as in SB0193, promote exercise, natural behaviors, and better overall health.

**2. Industry Landscape:** The industry is rapidly transitioning to cage-free due to consumer demand and ten existing state cage-free laws. Major retailers such as Target and Costco are committed to cage-free sourcing, and many businesses already source 100% cage-free eggs. Maryland needs to embrace cage-free systems to remain competitive in the evolving market.

**3. Public Health:** Chronic stress and lack of exercise in battery cages can suppress hens' immune systems, increasing the risk of spreading pathogens. Higher welfare systems, like cage-free, reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses and zoonotic diseases. This is critical in preventing Salmonella contamination, which causes significant illnesses and deaths, and preventing the emergence of new zoonotic diseases that could harm people and wildlife.

**4. Market Opportunity:** SB0193 creates a market opportunity for local and smallholder farmers. Cage-free requirements create a window for these farmers—who are often already cage-free or more able and motivated to transition—to fulfill retailer contracts previously held by large corporations who keep hens in cages, boosting Maryland's rural economy. Transitioning to cage-free systems poses minimal cost concerns for retailers and consumers, and CIWF is ready to assist in a smooth changeover.

Polling by the polling firm YouGov found strong support among Maryland voters for the cage-free egg legislation. Seventy-six percent of Maryland voters support cage-free egg legislation.

**In conclusion, CIWF urges the committee to support SB0193 for a safer, more ethical future. Please see our written testimony for further details. Thank you for your consideration.**

# **SB193\_Favorable\_Animal Equality.pdf**

Uploaded by: Margaret Marshall

Position: FAV

# animaleQUALITY

**Bill:** SB 193  
**Committee:** Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
**Position:** Support  
**Date:** January 23, 2024

Animal Equality, on behalf of our Maryland supporters, strongly supports Senate Bill 193. Not only will this bill vastly improve the lives of hens in the egg industry, but it could also protect Maryland residents from diseases caused by unsanitary, overcrowded egg farm conditions.

Most hens in Maryland’s egg industry are subjected to a life of cruel confinement and pain. They often spend their entire lives in cramped, wire cages with up to ten other birds.<sup>1</sup> Each bird spends the entirety of her life in a space smaller than the size of single sheet of letter-sized paper and forced to eat, sleep, and defecate in this space.<sup>2</sup> Not only are these hens unable to engage in natural behaviors—like spreading and flapping their wings, walking, perching and dust bathing—but they are also subjected to extreme physical and psychological pain. Stress from overcrowding has been shown to cause extreme psychological suffering, which can lead to feather pecking and even cannibalism.<sup>3</sup>

These conditions are not only cruel and harmful to the hens, but they also pose a significant risk to human health. In overcrowded egg farms, diseases often spread quickly amongst the animals. These zoonotic diseases can be spread to humans, causing sickness, death, and—in some cases—devastating pandemics. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has warned that “. . . 3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals.” Diseases like H1N1 (swine flu), SARS and MERS (avian flu), and even COVID-19 can be passed from animals to humans.<sup>4</sup>

Animal Equality strongly supports SB 193 for the safety of humans and non-human animals alike. Consider the following scenario:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thehumaneleague.org/article/battery-cages>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.humanesociety.org/cagefreemd>

<sup>3</sup> <https://animalequality.org/maryland-free-hens-from-cages/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.farmsanctuary.org/issue/public-health/#:~:text=A%20Hazard%20to%20Human%20Health&text=The%20Centers%20for%20Disease%20Control,of%20U.S.%20citizens%20every%20year.>

# animalEQUALITY

*You're standing on a crowded bus filled to the brim with people. You're pressed up against those around you, feeling as though you're suffocating. Each time you attempt to move, readjusting your grip on the handrail, you press up against someone. Each time someone near you tries to move, they do the same.*

*Then there's the smell. In the middle of summer, you're unable to open the bus windows. You smell the bodies around you, and it's almost unbearable. Because*

*this bus has yet to make any stops, your fellow passengers must relieve themselves somehow. The smell of excrement fills the air.*

*Of course, there's also the noise. The anxious passengers begin raising their voices as you begin to feel sick. One passenger must have come down with the flu, coughing on his fellow passengers. You long for rest, but it's so crowded that you're unable to lie down comfortably. Each time your eyes begin to close, you're jolted awake by the sounds of screaming, the overpowering smells, or fellow passengers stepping on you.*

*You wonder when the bus is finally going to stop to let you off—but it never does. This is the rest of your life.*

Just as humans desire space to move, extend their arms, and breathe fresh air, hens in Maryland's egg industry long for the same. SB 193 would save countless hens from lives of injury, illness, and death, making its approval both urgent and imperative.

Thank you,

Animal Equality



**SB0193\_FAV\_mgoldstein 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mathew Goldstein

Position: FAV



Secular Maryland

<https://secularmaryland.dorik.io> [secularmaryland@tutanota.com](mailto:secularmaryland@tutanota.com)

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January 23, 2024

**SB 193 - FAV**

**Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions**

Dear Chair Brian J. Feldman, Vice-Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

This bill sets sensible minimum standards for the farming of egg producing hens. Ideally such standards would be set nation wide to avoid disadvantaging Maryland farmers in the marketplace. Nevertheless, there appears to be a competitive market for cage free eggs that are raised without the imposition of harshly crowded confinement.

We tend to underestimate the capabilities of other animals that cannot speak. Chickens possess transitive reasoning, counting, time interval awareness, episodic memory, self-control, self-awareness [Hillemacher S, Ocklenburg S, Güntürkün O, Tiemann I (2023) Roosters do not warn the bird in the mirror: The cognitive ecology of mirror self-recognition. PLoS ONE 18(10): e0291416. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0291416>], perspective taking, social learning, empathy, etc. capabilities. Good animal welfare, for chickens as for humans, depends on physical well-being, mental well-being, and natural living. Legislation is needed to compensate for the commercial incentives that stress the lives of some farmed animals, including chickens.

Respectfully,  
Mathew Goldstein  
3838 Early Glow Ln  
Bowie, MD 20716p

# **SB193\_Favor\_GeneBaur.pdf**

Uploaded by: Miranda Eisen

Position: FAV



VIA [MGALEG.MARYLAND.GOV](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov)

Bill: Senate Bill 193  
Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Position: Favor  
Date: January 22, 2024

### **Support for SB 193: Maryland's Cage-Free Egg Legislation**

Farm Sanctuary, on behalf of our Maryland members, strongly supports Senate Bill 193, which will prohibit the production and sale of eggs under conditions where hens are subjected to extreme battery cage confinement.

Hens exploited by the egg industry are confined in cages so tightly that they cannot engage in their most basic natural behaviors like perching, nesting, or spreading their wings. In addition to inflicting immense suffering on hens, these inhumane and stressful environments pose health risks to humans, including spreading diseases like salmonella.

SB 193 presents a timely opportunity to prevent needless suffering and protect Maryland communities. In addition to family farmers, major corporations like McDonald's have successfully transitioned away from battery cage egg production. Over 200 other companies, including Maryland-based Marriott and Sodexo, have committed to a 100% cage-free egg supply.

Farmers, corporate suppliers, and animal advocates all agree that it is time to end the cruel confinement of birds in battery cages. We urge the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to progress SB 193 in the Maryland legislature.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Gene Baur, Co-Founder & President of Farm Sanctuary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Baur", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

# **Testimony in support of SB0193.pdf**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

1/23/2024

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0193 - FAVORABLE**

**Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0193, Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production**

My Jewish faith teaches me the importance of treating animals with compassion and care. Proverbs 12:10 teaches us that “A righteous man has regard for the desire of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.” Exodus 23:5 teaches us that even an animal belonging to an enemy must be treated with compassion and kindness “If you see your enemy's donkey lying under its burden would you refrain from helping him? You shall surely help along with him.”

Further, treatment of birds is discussed in Deuteronomy 22:6-7. ““If, as you are walking along, you happen to see a bird’s nest in a tree or on the ground with chicks or eggs, and the mother bird is sitting on the chicks or the eggs, you are not to take the mother with the chicks. <sup>7</sup> You must let the mother go, but you may take the chicks for yourself; so that things will go well with you, and you will prolong your life.” From this we learn we must not confine egg producing hens in such a way that we are cruel or in which we place the life of the mother hen in jeopardy.

A journal article in the National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7005410/>) makes the point that “Nowadays, it is widely recognized that poultry are sentient, and ethical guidelines apply to all aspects of production, breeding, farming, transport, and humane killing. Implementing these guidelines is still an area that needs improvement.”

SB0193 is a common-sense application of regulations on how we treat egg-laying chickens and makes a moral statement that Maryland stands for ethical treatment of animals that provide for our needs. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0193.**

**SB0193\_Favorable\_SaraShields.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Shields

Position: FAV



## HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

*Senator Brian Feldman, Chair  
Senator Cheryl Kagan, Vice-Chair  
and Members of the Standing Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment*

Submitted by: Dr. Sara Shields, Director of Farm Animal Welfare Science, Humane Society International

### **RE: Testimony in strong support of SB193: Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB193, a bill that is important for consumers and for animals.

I am an ethologist, a specialist in animal behavior and I completed my doctoral work at the University of California at Davis. I am the Director of Farm Animal Welfare Science for Humane Society International, and I work with farmers, corporations, governments, financial institutions, and veterinarians around the world to improve the welfare of farm animals. I respectfully request your support for SB 193, a bill that would require modest protections for egg-laying hens.

The confinement of animals in intensive agricultural production systems is an important issue. Consumers and food companies are increasingly concerned about how food is produced. It is well documented in scientific literature that certain aspects of intensive animal production are detrimental to the welfare of farm animals. This is particularly true for egg-laying hens confined to wire “battery cages,” which are so small the birds cannot even spread their wings. These systems prevent the expression of important natural behavior and have real physical consequences on the health and well-being of the animals. For example, the lack of normal movement and exercise is a prime cause of skeletal weakness in hens,<sup>1,2,3</sup> birds already prone to osteoporosis due to genetic selection for egg production, which requires significant calcium metabolism. Hens in cages are unable to roost at preferred heights, dustbathe, forage or express other forms of highly motivated natural behavior, each with a particular biological function. Comfort behavior, such as stretching, wing-flapping, and preening, are also reduced or prevented in battery-cages.<sup>4,5,6</sup> Feathers are important for body temperature regulation and protecting the underlying skin, but in cages, abrasion of the feathers against the wire can damage the hen’s plumage.<sup>7</sup> A cage is simply not an acceptable housing environment for a hen.

Battery cages were widely introduced after World War II, at a time when we knew much less about the behavioral needs of animals. Confinement systems were promoted as part of a trend toward the mechanization and automation of agriculture. There was little understanding of the depth of animals’ ability to experience suffering. Since then, the concept of animal welfare has evolved and become much more widely recognized, parallel to the published scientific research in animal behavior and cognition. **This research has confirmed that hens are intelligent, active, inquisitive, social animals with complex needs beyond simply feed, water, and shelter.**





**HUMANE SOCIETY  
INTERNATIONAL**

**This new science has been applied to improve animal housing designs in a way that complements the biology of the hens, rather than suppressing their natural behavior.** Modern cage-free systems include features such as nesting boxes, perches, and loose litter and are widely and successfully used around the world. In the United States alone, cage-free egg production has grown from a modest 4% of the total egg market in 2009 to 39% in 2023. Given the recent advances in legislation, and corporate commitments to purchase only cage-free eggs, this percentage is expected to continue to grow. There is now a large body of advice and guidelines from universities, genetics companies, animal welfare certifiers and equipment manufacturers to assist egg producers in managing cage-free systems well. A 2021 meta-analysis of 6,040 commercial flocks with 176 million hens in 16 different countries found that mortality in cage-free systems is as low as it is in cages.<sup>8</sup> With advanced management practices, cage-free hens are healthy and productive.

Like any other business, farms must keep pace with new research, market shifts, and changing social norms. Consumers care about where their food comes from, and they expect animals to be well treated on farms. **Cage-free production is the industry best practice and battery cages are outdated and inhumane.**

Please enact SB 193 and bring Maryland's egg production in line with the science, and with modern expectations regarding how farm animals should be housed.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sara Shields, PhD.  
Director, Farm Animal Welfare Science  
Humane Society International

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<sup>1</sup> Shipov A, Sharir A, Zelzer E, Milgram J, Monsonego-Ornan E, and Shahar R. 2010. The influence of severe prolonged exercise restriction on the mechanical and structural properties of bone in an avian model. *The Veterinary Journal* 183:153–60.

<sup>2</sup> Knowles TG and Broom DG. 1990. Limb bone strength and movement in laying hens from different housing systems. *Veterinary Record* 126:354-6.

<sup>3</sup> Norgaard-Nielsen G. 1990. Bone strength of laying hens kept in an alternative system compared with hens in cages and on deep-litter. *British Poultry Science* 31(1):81-9.

<sup>4</sup> Nicol CJ. 1987. Effect of cage height and area on the behaviour of hens housed in battery cages. *British Poultry Science* 28:327-35.

<sup>5</sup> Hughes BO and Black AJ. 1974. The effect of environmental factors on activity, selected behaviour patterns and "fear" of fowls in cages and pens. *British Poultry Science* 15:375-80.

<sup>6</sup> Appleby MC, Mench JA, and Hughes BO. 2004. *Poultry Behaviour and Welfare* (Wallingford, U.K.: CABI Publishing).

<sup>7</sup> European Food Safety Authority. 2023. Welfare of laying hens on farm. *EFSA Journal* 21(2):7789.

<sup>8</sup> Schuck-Paim C, Negro-Calduch E, and Alonso WJ. 2021. Laying hen mortality in different indoor housing systems: a meta-analysis of data from commercial farms in 16 countries. *Scientific Reports* 11: 3052.

# **SB193 Senator's Written Testimony to Committee.pdf**

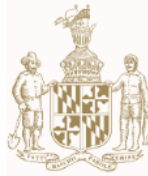
Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FWA

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

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Committee on Education, Energy,  
and the Environment



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Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
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800-492-7122 Ext. 3575  
Karen.Young@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 23, 2024

Support of SB193 – Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg  
Production - Prohibitions

The Honorable Brian Feldman

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Maryland Senate

Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and esteemed Members of this Committee:

It is my pleasure to speak with you today. My bill, Senate Bill 193, prohibits the use of battery cages for all eggs sold and produced in Maryland. It requires that eggs produced and sold in Maryland meet the cage-free standards established by the industry itself. Passing SB193 and ending the use of battery cages will prevent needless animal cruelty, decrease food contamination rates, and reduce price barriers for nutritious ingredients.

Battery cages are so-named because of how tightly they can be packed together. They are so small that birds cannot spread their wings. Each bird is given less than the space of an iPad on which to live their entire life. They are forced to eat, sleep, and defecate in the same space and are denied almost everything that is natural to them. These conditions are cruel and can increase the spread of diseases, like salmonella.

The industry's own United Egg Producers' common sense guidelines on cage-free systems allow hens to perform important, natural behaviors. My bill is based on these guidelines, and follows the same structure that has passed in ten states (California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Michigan, Massachusetts, Arizona, Utah, and Rhode Island) and has already been fully implemented in five (California, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington).

**Why is this bill important:**

**Safety**

Leading consumer advocacy organizations including the Center for Science in the Public Interest and Center for Food Safety have supported cage-free reforms. Extensive research shows

that locking hens in cages increases the risk of salmonella contamination. As of today, some companies charge an artificial premium to customers who are willing to pay more for eggs that meet heightened welfare and food safety standards. What this has done is create a two-tiered system in our state—higher income citizens can afford safer products for their families, while others have to settle for potentially-unsafe products.

### **Affordability**

My bill will eliminate the affordability gap for eggs that some families experience when accessing safe, healthy food by implementing one standard. One standard that establishes regulatory certainty and a fairer market for our farmers and Maryland families. Of course there are concerns that this could increase the cost of doing business. However, in California, for example, costs rose by less than a penny per egg.

Hundreds of companies have committed to switching to a 100 percent cage-free egg supply. This includes McDonald's, Costco, Target and Maryland's own Sodexo and Marriott. Small and family farmers with flocks of under 3,000 birds as well as birds used for their meat would be exempt from the new requirement.

### **Why now:**

Maryland lags behind our peers and competitors on the national stage. With many states going cage-free, the question is how to help farmers navigate the transition. For that reason, my bill has an implementation date of 2026 in order to give farmers the time they need.

Moreover, Marylanders support going cage-free. Polling results from YouGov show that 76% of Marylanders are in favor of cage-free eggs. For the sake of millions of hens and the people we represent, it is time to catch up.

This bill will guarantee safer, more affordable, and more egg-uitable access for all Marylanders. I urge the committee to return a favorable report of SB193.

Sincerely,



Senator Karen Lewis Young

**SB193 - Cage Free - Oppose - FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Grayson Middleton

Position: UNF



*Educate. Advocate. Innovate.*

Date: January 23, 2024  
To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
From: Holly Porter, Executive Director  
Re: SB 0193 – Prohibiting Confinement of Egg Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - **OPPOSE**

Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA) the 1,600-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 SB 193 and urges an unfavorable committee report.

SB 193 would prohibit the widespread and standard industry use of battery cages in egg-laying operations.

To be clear, the Delmarva Chicken Association represents the broiler (meat) chicken industry alone and does not normally advocate on behalf of other poultry or egg-layers. However, we do represent allied business members who supply and serve egg-laying operations as well as the broiler industry. In addition, as an agricultural association, we advocate for policies that are beneficial to Maryland agriculture as a whole and oppose those which would be detrimental.

Except for purposes of transportation, our chickens have never been, and will never be in cages. However, this is what logistically works best for our industry. As you will hear from others, their needs are different from ours. However, as an agricultural association, we take exception to any policies which are not economically sound or based on scientifically proven research. We have heard from at least one producer that if this legislation is passed, it will force them to close their family business. Some estimates show that implementing these rules could raise production costs by 40% and would require a 119% increase in labor.<sup>1</sup> Legislation which harms a farmer's well-being and runs contrary to fine-tuned, widespread, and generally accepted agricultural practices sets a dangerous precedent for the entire agricultural economy and community.

This legislation is also detrimental to both the livestock and the consumer. Analyses have shown that implementing this law could cause as much as a 35% reduction in egg supply, and a 22% increase in the retail price of eggs.<sup>2</sup> This is compounded by the persistently inflated price of eggs in the United States. Furthermore, studies from the European Union (where cage-free is now mandated) have demonstrated significantly higher rates of infectious diseases among poultry.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly concerning for our industry, as High Path Avian Influenza still poses the most significant threat to our economic well-being and animal welfare.

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<sup>1</sup> [Economic and market issues on the sustainability of egg production in the United States: Analysis of alternative production systems - ScienceDirect](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Understanding the Pores of a Soilless Substrate \(purdue.edu\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Infectious diseases in free-range compared to conventional poultry production - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)



*Educate. Advocate. Innovate.*

Again, while we do not use cages in the broiler industry, we think it is very concerning when legislation is considered which gives more credence to objective beliefs about what is best for the animal than it does sound science and economic viability.

For these reasons we urge an **unfavorable** vote on SB 0193.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at [porter@dcachicken.com](mailto:porter@dcachicken.com) or 302-222-4069 or Grayson Middleton at [middleton@dcahicken.com](mailto:middleton@dcahicken.com) or 410-490-3329.

Sincerely,

Holly Porter  
Executive Director

# 24 MGPA SB193 Cage free eggs.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Thompson

Position: UNF





Maryland Grain Producers Association  
210 Fallen Horse Circle, Suite 100, Queenstown, MD 21658  
Lindsay.mdag@gmail.com (p) 443-262-8491  
www.marylandgrain.com

Date: January 23, 2024

Senate Bill 193 - Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production – Prohibitions

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment

MGPA Position: OPPOSE

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. MGPA opposes Senate Bill 193 which would prohibit beginning in calendar 2026, knowing confinement of an “egg-laying hen” in an enclosure that is not a “cage-free housing system” require the farm owner or operator to obtain a certificate of compliance and prohibits the sale of shell eggs or egg products in violation of the bill’s prohibition or the certificate requirement.

MGPA supports the responsible and humane care of egg-laying hens which is currently being done in both caged and cage-free systems in Maryland. Currently, egg-laying hens in Maryland consume nearly 3 million bushels of corn directly from Maryland farmers every year. This is 4% of Maryland total corn production and a value of nearly \$15M to Maryland farmers.

While some of these farms have already begun the transition to cage-free houses and plan to continue, it is a long and expensive transition. Prohibition of non-cage-free housing systems at the beginning of 2026 is not a realistic or feasible timeline. Requiring this change on such a short timeline would take 80% of current Maryland egg production offline. This would be a significant loss to Maryland grain farmers from a market demand perspective.

MGPA believes the market is moving in this direction in a manner and at a speed that is logistically and financially feasible.

We urge your unfavorable report on Senate Bill 193.

# **SB193 - RMC Opposition Testimony-Agriculture-Confi**

Uploaded by: Megan D'Arcy

Position: UNF



*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

*Charlotte Davis, Executive Director*

Testimony in Opposition of  
Senate Bill 193 – Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg  
Production - Prohibitions  
Education, Energy, and the Environment  
January 23, 2024

**The Rural Maryland Council opposes Senate Bill 193 – Agriculture – Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions.** This bill prohibits a certain farm owner or operator from knowingly confining egg-laying hens in an enclosure in a certain manner, subject to certain exceptions, on and after January 1, 2026; prohibiting a business owner or operator or a farm owner or operator from selling shell eggs or egg products under certain circumstances on and after January 1, 2026; and specifying that a certain certification be obtained in a certain manner to sell shell eggs and egg products.

The Council opposes SB193 because it will create economic hardship to egg-laying farmers by banning their traditional practices and forcing them to make costly changes to their existing barns in order to sell their product – the result would be a 41% increase in cost production to retrofit existing barns and an 119% increase in labor.

For the health of the birds, cages are used as a form of protection and are an approved animal agriculture practice. By moving to a cage-free operation, the hen mortality rate increases significantly due to more bacterial habitat being introduced in the barn. Lastly, these farms are contracted with out-of-state companies that will just drop their contracts with the farms and then these farms will have to create a new demand for their eggs in a market where there is already an oversupply of cage-free eggs. This bill would put the Maryland egg-laying farms, that farm this way, out of business. Currently, the industry is about 5% of all poultry (approximately \$50 to \$60 million in sales), which means a lot of growers would be negatively affected.

The Rural Maryland Council supports the State's poultry industry – the largest agricultural sector in Maryland and requests that you oppose Senate Bill 193.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

**“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”**



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*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

*Charlotte Davis, Executive Director*

## **comments on SB 193.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rob Dvorak

Position: UNF



795 Wards Hill Road, Warwick MD 21912

Maryland General Assembly  
Senate  
Chair Feldman and other Members  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Ise America is the largest producer of shell eggs in the state of MD and currently has 87 employees working in various support positions of our operations. A very high percentage of these folks have been with Ise for decades, active in the community with their families.

As the representative of ISE America and these 87 families, I would like to submit the following facts and unanswered questions concerning SB 193.

- \* Ise America's Md production footprint for conventional egg layers was 2,117,000 hens
- \* To replace all these hens to cage free production to support the mandate would cost ~ \$116,435,000 (today's prices)
- \* To add cage free pullet growing to support the mandate would cost ~\$24,300,000 (today's prices)
- \* Ise achievements to date towards these goals since 2018 ~ \$35,000,000
- \* The balance left to achieve the mandate is ~ \$105,735,000
- \* If this bill passes, without a phase in, there is no longer a price premium for cage free to go towards any future conversions - nor will we have caged production to generate revenue during the conversions which will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to find lenders
- \* Where does the \$105,735,000 come from to pay for these conversions while also being fiscally responsible by 1/1/26?
- \* Perhaps avenues of assistance could be made available from MD Dept of AG, USDA or other interested parties?
- \* Assuming no agreement is made between all parties and the bill goes into effect on 1/1/26, then we would be euthanizing - for no good reason - 1,500,000 million caged hens and 270,000 replacement pullets for caged production
- \* Ise America, with bill passage, would be unable to continue providing a staple food source of protein to consumers inside and outside the state of MD who simply want the most affordable product on the shelf at that moment
- \* Ise believes the purchase of Cage free eggs should be a consumer choice and backed by retail demand, but would be willing to phase towards a cage free environment, as long as the timeline is set at a more realistic date of 1/1/2030

\* Why is this bill only for "certain" hens (page 1, paragraph 1) that have produced an egg except in a form that is stated in paragraph 3, page 3? To me, this implies that the social value of "other" hens, who have laid their eggs as a part of an ingredient in retail box mixes or some other consumable package (page 3, egg products - paragraph 4), have a different standard. The conventional cage farming practices of those eggs are acceptable on MD retail shelves, but a table shell egg is not?

If the general assembly is actually true to their position on cage free eggs, that these bills are to protect the health and welfare of every consumer in the state of MD - promoting food safety and animal welfare, then this bill needs to be all-inclusive of anything egg.

\* What is the plan to monitor, enforce and control the movements of eggs so nothing "conventional" gets inside the marketplace in MD as well as what is the plan for inspections of operator/owner systems of egg production in and out of the state? The general assembly's intent is to pass a bill that will have a price tag as I've stated above by June 2024 and not have a signed plan to enforce it until July 1, 2025?

\* Since MD is looking to "require" cage free production as its standard practice from all state operators/owners, shouldn't the state of MD require all of its institutions, at a minimum, to purchase their eggs from state operators/owners at let's say, \$1.50 per dozen over cost?

Kind regards,



Rob Dvorak  
Ise America, Inc.  
VP Northeast Operations  
(Office) 410-755-6300  
(Cell) 443-350-3064  
[Rob-Dvorak@IseAmerica.com](mailto:Rob-Dvorak@IseAmerica.com)

# **Opposition SB193 Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-**

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: UNF





## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035  
410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

January 22, 2024

**To:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau

**Re:** **Oppose SB0193 Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions**

On behalf of our nearly 9,500 Farm Bureau families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in opposition to SB0193. This bill bans the use of cages in egg-laying farms in Maryland starting January 1, 2026.

The economic impact to an existing farm to make these changes is a 41% increase in cost of production to retrofit the existing barns and an 119% increase in labor. By moving to a cage-free operation, the hen mortality rate increases significantly due to more bacterial habitat being introduced in the barn. Also, these farms are contracted with out-of-state companies that will just drop their contracts in Maryland and then these farms will have to create a new demand for their eggs in a market where there is already an oversupply of cage-free eggs. This bill would put the egg-laying farms, that farm this way, out of business or at a competitive disadvantage.

State regulations, retailer pledges, and consumer demand have contributed to a rising share of egg-laying hens housed in cage-free systems over the past decade. Nonetheless, conversion from conventional to cage-free housing is costly for both egg producers and consumers. As such, there remains uncertainty about the extent to which egg producers will be willing and/or able to continue the transition to cage-free housing at a rate commensurate with retailers' cage-free pledges. Shell egg producers understand the importance of retailer demand driving the evolution of the market to cage-free. However, several barriers still remain, such as; higher costs and labor requirements, challenges obtaining financing to convert or build new facilities, and skepticism that retailer pledges can be met by January 2026 without significant financial incentives.

**MDFB Policy:** We strongly oppose any ban of the use of cages in layer operations.

**Maryland Farm Bureau Respectfully Opposes SB0193**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough  
Director of Government Relations

*Please reach out to Tyler Hough, (443) 878-4045 with any questions*

# **SB 193- Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commerci**

Uploaded by: Tyler Majchrzak

Position: UNF



January 23, 2024

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Horizon Farm Credit

Bill: **SB 193 - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions**

Position: **OPPOSE**

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Horizon Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services throughout our five-state lending territory in good times and bad. With over \$6.5 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 23,000 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast.

**Senate Bill 193** would create an unnecessary and expensive burden for operators of egg-laying hen operations and potentially increase costs to consumers. Although Maryland's poultry industry is better known for meat chicken production, arbitrarily prohibiting any method of production would set a poor precedent across all sectors of agriculture and creates uncertainty for farm families and their businesses.

While farmers and consumers continue to deal with significant inflationary pressures, further squeezing access to a high-quality, affordable source of protein like eggs would seem counterproductive. Additionally, at a time of fiscal tightening across State government, this bill would increase state spending in FY 2025 by over \$360,000 and continue costing the General Fund over \$250,000 annually.

**Senate Bill 193** would likely increase the overall cost of production for Maryland's egg producers artificially creating a competitive disadvantage and raise grocery prices for hard-working Marylanders.

**Horizon Farm Credit OPPOSES SB 193**

*For more information, please contact Tyler Majchrzak at 443-244-1050 or [tmajchrzak@horizonfc.com](mailto:tmajchrzak@horizonfc.com).*

**20240122171919466.pdf**

Uploaded by: Wayne Collins

Position: UNF

Matt Resnick, President  
Kyle Feldman, 1st Vice President  
Katie Kurtz, 2nd Vice President  
Carole A. Dingess, Secretary  
Emanuel Puglisi, Immediate Past President



50 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
Telephone: 410-841-5769  
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January 22, 2024

To: Chairman Feldman  
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Re: SB0193 Comments

Honorable Senator Feldman:

The Maryland Egg Council is a non-profit organization based in Maryland which represents Maryland egg producers promoting the consumption of eggs to our residents. We are strongly opposed to the passage of SB0193 which would restrict the production and sale of eggs and egg products in the state of Maryland. This bill will create a tremendous economic burden on our producers and regulatory agencies tasked with its enforcement. At a minimum the state of Maryland should at least work with the industry to create a reasonable timeline for implementation. Other states have done the following:

- Massachusetts passed a law in 2016 similar to the proposal, but did not expect implementation until 2022
- Rhode Island pass a law in 2018 similar to the proposal, but not expect implementation until 2026
- Michigan pass a law in 2019 similar to the proposal, but not expect implementation until 2025

For egg producers in the state, it would take generally 12 to 18 months to even build a new cage-free facility to house the laying hens to ensure the same inventory level of egg flow to Maryland consumers. These types of investments cost on average \$45 per laying hen so you can imagine the expense that would put on any one company participating in this industry.

While the Council strongly opposes any form of regulation around the egg laying industry, at a minimum the legislation should see the value in creating a reasonable glide path for the industry and regulation to adopt a new standard. In addition, as you are aware, the lifecycle for laying hen extends longer than 12 months thereby putting animal lives at risk.

As of January 22, 2024, the Food Lion in Bel Air, Maryland was advertising a dozen large white eggs at \$1.59 while the large cage free brown at \$3.29. This shows the impact to the consumer in a challenging economic environment.

Again, all parties need to evaluate the impact of this change through fact-based research to ensure a successful outcome for the State of Maryland.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt Resnick".

Matt Resnick  
President  
Maryland Egg Council

# **Cage Free Legislative Position 01192024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Morgan Mills

Position: INFO



## SB193 INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY

Animal welfare, conservation of resources and protection of the health of the public are the pillars of veterinary medicine. As the largest organization of veterinarians in Maryland, the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association wishes to make clear there is no scientific body of evidence to suggest that cage free eggs are: more nutritious, safer, carry less foodborne pathogen risk or are necessarily more humane.

Neither the Food and Drug Administration nor the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service have identified any increased risk of foodborne illness from caged eggs. What is likely most critical regarding bacterial contamination of shelled eggs is exactly where the egg is deposited. *Salmonella* and *E. coli* are omnipresent in environments that house laying hens and if the egg is deposited on an unclean floor or outdoor environment or on a soiled conveyor belt, bacterial contamination can result in significant risk factors to the consuming public.

It is important to note that the conveyor belt is likely to be a component of both a modern caged system or cage free system. Additionally, when chickens lay eggs in predictable locations (like conveyor belts available in both caged and free-range systems) there is an opportunity to focus extensively on keeping this surface free of organic debris. The rate of recovery of critical bacterial taxon from egg conveyor belts tends to be lower than from any other areas of the housing system (caged or free range).

Regardless of how a hen is housed, eggs and egg products are inspected by the USDA and FDA for safety and appropriate labeling, additionally the Egg Safety Final Rule applies to both caged and cage free eggs to ensure adequate protection of the public from foodborne illness.

From a welfare perspective it is evident a hen housed outside of a cage has a more natural life. That does carry benefits to the individual welfare of that animal. This is the only meritorious reason for such mandates. However, producers are not caging these animals to be inherently cruel. Hens display behavioral characteristics that can, and many times do lead to welfare issues of their own including: cannibalism and other mutilation type behaviors and cages can prevent the manifestation of these undesirable behavioral characteristics. Additionally, parasites that infect birds are present in significantly higher numbers when birds are in contact with floors and dirt. Birds are significantly more likely to fall ill and die from these diseases when housed in more natural environments. When birds are unable to produce well in their environments it is not only a welfare issue to the bird but also an

inherent risk to the public who depend on adequate egg and meat production to maintain food supplies.

Finally, High Path Avian Influenza is a disease of significant risk to not only our poultry but our regional economy and global food security. Increased interface between production poultry and migratory birds and waterfowl increases the likelihood of these outbreaks which we have seen a resurgence of in recent years. It is true that screens can reduce predation of free-range birds effectively, but they are limited in their ability to prevent the transfer of highly virulent and pathogenic strains of airborne viral diseases.

The MDVMA wishes to highlight there are inherent advantages to both free range and caged production systems for the health of the bird and the public. The choice of which type of egg to purchase is and should remain for Maryland consumers to decide. We believe it is critical to food security/public health that Maryland producers can produce eggs with flexible systems that reduce externalities posed by adverse disease or weather events when necessary while maintaining welfare of the individual chicken.