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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.¹

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

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¹ 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