

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.