



**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)