



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 14, 2024

To: The House Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production – Prohibitions- HB 357- Support

Chair Korman, Vice - Chair Boyce, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. 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 the State of Maryland, I respectfully ask that the House Environment & Transportation Committee vote favorably for Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production – Prohibitions- HB 357.

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.

HB 357 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.

Marylanders believe in compassion for *all* animals, not just pets. Polling numbers from a YouGov 2023 poll show that 76 percent of Maryland voters support their legislators voting in favor of cage-free egg legislation like HB 357, while only 17 percent oppose.

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 Delegate Terrasa for her sponsorship of HB 357 and ask the committee for a favorable report.