



Secular Maryland

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February 14, 2024

**HB 357 - FAV**

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

Dear Chair Marc Korman, Vice-Chair Regina T. Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation 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  
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