

Bill: HB 0357

To: Chair Marc Korman, Vice Chair Regina T. Boyce and Members of the
Environment and Transportation Committee

Room 251

House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Position: Favorable

Date: February 14, 2024

My name is Cheryl Leahy, and I am the Executive Director for Animal Outlook (AO), a nonprofit animal protection organization with a home base here in Maryland. I am testifying in support of HB 0357 for many of the same reasons you will hear others present — battery cages are inhumane to animals and also present food safety and public health risks. What I believe I can uniquely offer today is a specific factual look at the realities of battery cage production, including here in Maryland.

AO has conducted multiple investigations of battery egg facilities in Maryland.

- In 2001, numerous occasions in 2002, 2003, and then again in 2005, AO entered Maryland battery cage egg facilities where hundreds of thousands of birds are warehoused. AO documented the following repeatedly across these investigations:
 - Hens crowded in barren wire cages, restricting even simple movements
 - Animals in the lower rows of cages forced to live in the excrement of birds above them
 - Severe and widespread feather loss
 - Birds with severe and untreated illness and injuries deprived of veterinary care, including multiple disfiguring swollen and infected eyes.
 - Birds trapped in the bars of their cages or under other birds, immobilized and unable to access food or water
 - Widespread dead birds, with live birds forced to live in cages with their decomposing cage mates

While I have highlighted the Maryland egg industry, AO's investigations of other battery cage egg facilities reveal almost identical conditions and issues.

- In 2005, 2007, and 2009, AO investigated battery egg facilities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Minnesota, and documented:
 - Once again, the same kind of overcrowding in cages, severely decomposed birds with live birds in cages, sick and injured birds with no veterinary care, feces landing on animals, stuck birds with no access to food and water, and escaped or abandoned birds in the manure pits or aisles.
 - Each worker being responsible for between 125,000 and 225,000 birds, with one worker saying they could spend no more than an hour per house looking for dead birds

When it comes to battery cages, cruelty and suffering is the rule, not the exception.

Thank you,

Cheryl Leahy

Executive Director

P: 301.891.2458

Appendix: Select Photos



Cecilton, MD: Bird is seen with a severely swollen and infected eye



Cecilton, MD: birds crowded in a battery cage with severe feather loss