



February 14, 2024

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Horizon Farm Credit

Bill: HB 357 - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions

Position: OPPOSE

Horizon Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services throughout our five-state lending territory in good times and bad. With over \$6.5 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 23,000 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast.

House Bill 357 would create an unnecessary and expensive burden for operators of egg-laying hen operations and potentially increase costs to consumers. Although Maryland's poultry industry is better known for meat chicken production, arbitrarily prohibiting any method of production would set a poor precedent across all sectors of agriculture and creates uncertainty for farm families and their businesses.

While farmers and consumers continue to deal with significant inflationary pressures, further squeezing access to a high-quality, affordable source of protein like eggs would seem counterproductive. Additionally, at a time of fiscal tightening across State government, this bill would increase state spending in FY 2025 by over \$360,000 and continue costing the General Fund over \$250,000 annually.

House Bill 357 would likely increase the overall cost of production for Maryland's egg producers artificially creating a competitive disadvantage and raise grocery prices for hard-working Marylanders.

Horizon Farm Credit OPPOSES HB 357

For more information, please contact Tyler Majchrzak at 443-244-1050 or tmajchrzak@horizonfc.com.