



**ANIMAL LEGAL
DEFENSE FUND** EST
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To: Chair Marc Korman, Vice Chair Regina T. Boyce and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Animal Legal Defense Fund
Re: Support Letter for HB 0357
Date: February 12, 2024

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Committee:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals and has been working for over four decades to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. On behalf of our 24,000 members and supporters in Maryland, I respectfully ask that you support HB 0357, which would prohibit extreme confinement for egg-laying hens and the sale of eggs that come from hens raised in cages.

Hens at many industrial animal agriculture facilities – including some in Maryland – are crammed so densely into cages that they cannot even move around or spread their wings. They live their entire lives this way, unable to engage in any natural behaviors that are critical to their well-being. Additionally, packing hens into cages in this manner increases the risk for zoonotic disease transmission, as diseases spread at a faster rate among animals confined more closely together. We are currently in the largest outbreak of Avian Flu in U.S. history, with approximately 80 million birds being killed to control the spread of the disease. Prohibiting the raising of hens in cages and eggs that come from hens raised in cages will help curb the rate of transmission for Avian Flu and other diseases, like salmonella, that can infect humans and make us gravely ill.

HB 0357 would protect hens from cruelty, provide safer options for Maryland consumers at the grocery store, reduce the risk for zoonotic disease transmission, and make Maryland a leader in the nationwide trend for more humane egg options.

It is abundantly clear that the future of egg production is cage-free and passing HB 0357 into law will put Maryland at the forefront of this national shift.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alicia Prygoski
Strategic Legislative Affairs Manager
Animal Legal Defense Fund