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Dear Delegates and Senators,

As a concerned citizen I am writing to you to show my strong support for bill SB806/HB0834 banning battery cages in Maryland for egg laying hens. I was born in Maryland, attended Towson University and now work as an Autism Instructor in Maryland helping our adults with autism reach personal and behavioral goals.

As someone who has personally interacted with hens in Maryland, I have seen these animals act emotionally and intelligently. They would beg like a dog for food eaten around them and they purr like cats when happy. Seeing a child learn to respectfully care for these hens was a beautiful memory of mine that is very different from the lesson we are teaching when our laws allow hens to spend their entire lives stuffed into wire cages with unsanitary conditions.

According to Animal Equality the reality for most egg laying hens in Maryland is that they will spend their entire life in a cage in a factory farm setting experiencing “extreme pain, psychological stress from overcrowding” and “cannibalism by other hens” (<https://animalequality.org/maryland-free-hens-from-cages/>). In Maryland it is considered animal cruelty for cats and dogs to be in these conditions and it is time for the state to recognize that it is animal cruelty for any animal to spend its life this way.

According to The Humane League, many countries in Asia have already gone cage free including China, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand.

Austria, Czechia, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands are also “ending all cages” (<https://thehumaneleague.org/article/cage-free-progress-worldwide>). These examples illustrate how many governments around the world have already recognized how unacceptable battery cages are, the need to update their policies and how possible it is to implement successfully.

Thank you for reviewing my input as a Maryland consumer. Please vote in favor of bill SB806/HB0834.

Christeen Fernando