

Testimony in Support of SB806/HB0834

Dear Members of the Maryland Environment and Transportation Committee,

Our name is Emily Zhao, and I am the owner of the restaurant St. Veg in Rockville, Maryland. I am writing today in strong support of SB806/HB0834, which would ban the sale of eggs from cruel and inhumane battery cages. As a restaurant owner, I believe that this bill is not only a necessary step for animal welfare but also a reasonable and manageable change for businesses like mine.

Before moving to Maryland, I owned a restaurant in Seattle, Washington, where a similar cage-free law was enacted. I can say from firsthand experience that this law did not negatively affect my business. Customers appreciate knowing that restaurants' ingredients align with ethical and sustainable practices.

Here in Maryland, I have continued to prioritize sourcing humane and quality products because I believe that restaurants should not be supporting the cruelty of battery cages. Hens confined to these cages suffer immensely, unable to perform even the most basic natural behaviors. Many major food companies, including national restaurant chains, have already committed to moving away from battery cage eggs, demonstrating that this is the direction the industry is heading.

Beyond the ethical concerns, this bill would also help keep production costs stable over time. Many egg producers are already moving toward cage-free systems in response to consumer demand and legal requirements in other states. A uniform standard in Maryland would create a level playing field, preventing uncertainty in the market. Additionally, studies have shown that cage-free systems can reduce the risk of salmonella contamination, making eggs safer for consumers and reducing potential health risks for restaurant customers.

I urge you to pass SB806/HB0834. Not only will it align Maryland with the growing national movement toward more humane food systems, but it will also support businesses like mine that want to do the right thing. This law will not harm restaurants—it will simply ensure that Maryland no longer allows the sale of one of the cruelest products in our food system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Emily Zhao
Owner of St. Veg
Shady Grove Road #14929-M
Rockville, MD 20850