



Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States and
Humane Society International

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Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
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RE: Strong support for HB 834

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce and members of the committee: Humane World for Animals (formerly known as the Humane Society of the United States), on behalf of our thousands of supporters across Maryland, thank Delegate Terrasa for introducing HB 834. Eggs in Maryland should be safer, more affordable and more humanely produced. HB 834 will make safer foods more affordable for Maryland residents, and we wholeheartedly support the passage of this measure.

On many egg factory farms, hens are crammed into cages so small the birds can't fully spread their wings. Each bird is given less space than the dimensions of an iPad on which to live her entire life. She's forced to eat, sleep, and defecate in the same space and is denied almost everything that is natural to her. These conditions are cruel to the animals and increase the spread of diseases, like Salmonella, which can then sicken people. Extensive research shows that locking hens in cages increases the risk of Salmonella contamination, a bacteria that can be lethal, especially in children and the elderly.

HB 834 codifies where the market is already going. More than 200 of the country's largest food companies have committed to switching to a 100 percent cage-free egg supply. This includes Burger King, Unilever, General Mills, Aramark and Costco, along with Maryland-based Sodexo and Marriott.

Cage-free legislation is popular with Maryland voters. According to a recent survey conducted by Hart Research, a strong majority (two-thirds) of Marylanders want the state legislature to pass a cage-free law like HB 834. Even after hearing opponents' claims, support for cage-free legislation remains unchanged amongst Maryland voters.

Another survey, which was conducted by YouGov, of 600 Maryland voters reveals widespread confusion about egg carton labels and the nightmarish conditions that hens are often subjected to. When presented with three different egg cartons sourced from farms that employ a caged housing system, only 23% of Maryland voters correctly believed that the eggs were sourced from cage-confined hens. The confusion is driven by the use phrases on egg cartons, such as "farm fresh" and "all natural," which sound nice, but are meaningless. The results prove the need for cage-free legislation so consumers can know what they're actually purchasing. Moreover, after being presented with photos depicting an average caged housing facility, 83% of those surveyed said they support a policy requiring that eggs produced or sold in Maryland come from cage-free environments. Further, when informed that such a policy would modestly increase egg prices, 82% of those surveyed still supported cage-free legislation in the state.



Currently, retailers often charge a premium for a dozen cage-free eggs. Because of this artificial premium, lower income Maryland residents have a harder time purchasing cage-free eggs. Since cage-free eggs will become the new standard under HB 834, that artificial premium will go away. Retailers will market cage-free as their “value” egg to draw customer foot traffic, just like they do today with eggs from caged hens. So, HB 834 will give more access to safer food for Maryland families. A new [USDA report](#) confirms that when states adopt cage-free policies, premiums on cage-free eggs go down.

[Egg industry data](#) and consumer data shows that egg prices in California—which has a nearly identical law prohibiting the sale of eggs from hens in cages—changed by less than a penny per egg once the law was implemented. In addition, the hidden costs of such inhumane confinement are increased cruelty and food safety risks. It’s animals and consumers who are currently paying those hidden prices.

HB 834 is in line with laws enacted in other states. Over the past several years, red, blue and purple states have passed similar measures, like California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Arizona. Utah and Rhode Island have also passed cage-free egg standards. These measures all garnered strong bipartisan support.

In addition to aligning with other states, HB 834 is farmer-friendly by providing market and regulatory certainty. The bill contains the egg industry’s own cage-free standards. The United Egg Producers’ commonsense guidelines on cage-free systems allow hens to perform important natural behaviors like extending their wings, walking, perching, dustbathing and laying eggs in nest boxes. HB 834 is based on these guidelines. It also contains an exemption for small and family farmers with flocks fewer than 5,000 birds. Additionally, the bill only applies to egg-laying hens, not broiler chickens (i.e., birds who are used for their meat). So, it wouldn’t impact Perdue or any other broiler meat producer.

We also understand the United States is experiencing a devastating, nationwide outbreak of avian flu. Avian flu is often passed from wild birds interacting with domesticated chickens (source: [PBS News](#)). However, Maryland’s cage-free bill does *not* mandate outdoor access for egg-laying hens. The overwhelming majority of commercial cage-free hens live their entire lives indoors, meaning they wouldn’t interact with wild birds, nor catch avian flu from them. **Moreover, according to the USDA, in 2025 thus far, 74% of avian flu outbreaks were in cage systems, whereas only 26% of outbreaks occurred in cage-free systems (source: [USDA](#))**

Since HB 834 contains a multi-year phase-in period, it is highly unlikely that the country will still be experiencing an avian flu outbreak. So, the time to act is now. Maryland has consistently been a leader in protecting animals from abuse and in promoting ethical business practices, and HB 834 fits perfectly with that tradition.

For the foregoing reasons, we kindly urge you to vote yes on HB 834.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Brindle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kate" being more prominent than the last name "Brindle".

Kate Brindle
Program Manager, Public and Corporate Policy, Farm Animal Protection
Humane World for Animals