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Testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 834** – Prohibition on Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production

Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Friends of the Earth U.S. and our more than 20,000 members and supporters in Maryland, we respectfully ask for your support of HB 834, which addresses the extreme confinement of farm animals by ensuring cage-free conditions. Not only will this create more humane living conditions for these animals, it will also help facilitate a more sustainable farming system.

Shifting to cage-free systems where animals have more space is a critical step away from the factory farming model that is contributing to the climate crisis, pollution, foodborne illness, unsafe communities and working conditions, and inhumane treatment of animals. Factory farms that confine millions of animals inside windowless warehouses produce a massive amount of waste that pollutes our land, water and air.

Communities living near factory farms on the Eastern Shore often experience noxious smells, deal with unsafe drinking water, and suffer from respiratory health impacts. Typically – including here in Maryland – it's lower-income families and communities of color that are harmed the most.

Shifting to cage-free systems has long been favored by organizations supporting family farms, sustainability, and rural communities. Many states have already passed similar laws; HB 834 would continue that momentum. We hope Maryland will pass HB 834 into law and further create a safer, more sustainable food system.

Thank you for your consideration of our position, and we respectfully urge a favorable report.