

Members of the Maryland Environment and Transportation Committee,

My name is Ken Ayres, and I am a resident of Rockville, Maryland. I strongly support SB0806/HB0834, which would ban the sale of eggs from battery-caged hens. This bill is an important step forward for Maryland's food safety and public health.

Many of us are currently witnessing an increase in egg prices due to bird flu. **It's important to know that this has nothing to do with the cage-free production environment; bird flu does not discriminate by the type of housing or the size of the farm. The disease is carried by wild birds.** Outbreaks have occurred in both caged and cage-free facilities, as well as in poultry farms of all sizes. Preventing bird flu is about strong biosecurity measures, not keeping hens in cages.

Cage-free systems do **help reduce the risk of other dangerous infections, such as Salmonella.** Research has shown that eggs from battery cage systems are more likely to be contaminated with Salmonella due to the crowded, unsanitary conditions in which the hens are kept. When hens are crammed together with little room to move, bacteria spread more easily, increasing the risk of contamination. Cage-free systems allow for better airflow, cleaner environments, and healthier birds, which ultimately leads to safer eggs for consumers.

This bill is about keeping Maryland's food system modern and safe. I ask you to vote in favor of SB0806/HB0834 to ensure that our state remains a leader in responsible food production.

Sincerely,

Ken Ayres
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