

Testimony in Favor of HB 834

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the committee,

We ask that the committee please support HB 834.

As background about us, we run Third Way Farm, which is located in Havre de Grace, Maryland. Our farm spans 67 acres and has been dedicated to the principles of permaculture, sustainability, and regeneration since we broke ground in 2015.

We believe in being good stewards of the land rather than dominating it. Our commitment to sustainable farming practices is evident in our no-till farming methods, which promote the highest level of soil management for our produce, protein, and fiber production. We also employ companion planting, composting, and rotational grazing methods to ensure the health and vitality of our farm ecosystem.

HB 834 is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Animal Welfare:** HB 834 will phase out the use of barren wire cages for egg-laying hens, allowing them to engage in natural behaviors. Allowing hens to be raised out of cages is essential for their well-being.
2. **Food Safety:** The current confinement practices increase the spread of diseases like salmonella, which can sicken people. By transitioning to cage-free systems, we can reduce the risk of such diseases and ensure safer food for Maryland families.
3. **Consumer Demand:** This bill will help Maryland farmers meet the growing demand for more humane products, while providing regulatory certainty.

At our farm, we are consistently learning and improving our practices, hoping that our efforts empower others to join us in our mission to cultivate faith, community, and justice for all. We believe that HB 834 is a step towards achieving these goals and creating a more sustainable and humane food system in Maryland.

For these reasons, we kindly ask the committee to support HB 834.

Thank you,

Tommy and Michelle Shireman
Third Way Farm