

Maryland General Assembly

Environment and Transportation Committee

Written Testimony in Support of SB806/HB0834

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Hayden Kessinger, and I was born and raised on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Chicken farming is a way of life here, and I've seen firsthand how deeply connected our state is to this industry. That's why I strongly support SB806/HB0834, which would ban the sale of eggs from battery-caged hens. Maryland has always been a leader in agriculture, and it's important that we keep up with the times as the industry moves toward more humane and sustainable practices.

Growing up, I couldn't ignore the reality of what happens to chickens in our state. I've watched transport trucks drive down our roads, packed with birds crammed so tightly together they can barely move, their feathers torn out from rubbing against the metal bars. I've seen the massive industrial farms where tens of thousands of birds are confined in dark, overcrowded sheds. And I know that the conditions for egg-laying hens in battery cages are just as bad—if not worse. These hens spend their entire lives in cages so small they can't even spread their wings, let alone engage in natural behaviors like dust bathing or foraging.

But Maryland is better than this. Our state has always had a proud agricultural tradition, and we should be leading the way, not falling behind. Many major food companies, grocery stores, and restaurants have already pledged to switch to cage-free eggs because they know that's where the market is headed. States like California, Washington, and Massachusetts have passed similar laws, and producers are adapting. If Maryland doesn't keep up, we risk being left behind as the industry modernizes.

This bill is about ensuring Maryland's agricultural future stays strong. The poultry industry has always evolved with the times, and this is the next step. I urge you to pass SB806/HB0834 and help move Maryland forward.

Sincerely,

Hayden Kessinger, 30010 Schwaninger Road, Easton, MD 21601