

**Glenn Family Farm**  
**Scott and Barb Glenn**  
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**February 18, 2025**

**RE: Opposition to HB0834 Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions**

**TO: Environment & Transportation Committee Chairperson Delegate Korman,  
E&T Vice Chair Delegate Boyce,  
E&T Members Howard County Delegates Terrasa & Ziegler  
Howard County Sponsor Delegate Feldmark  
Other Members of the E&T Committee**

**Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB0834. As a constituent, supporter of local agriculture, vice president of Howard County Farm Bureau, and member of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I am respectfully asking you to oppose HB0834, the cage-free egg mandate.** If this bill were to pass, it could hurt the very people that it intends to support. The bill solves nothing for either farmers or consumers, but it does create new problems. Mandating cage-free egg production creates increased costs for both farmers and consumers, may reduce nutritional options, and research shows, can result in poorer animal welfare and health if not managed appropriately. .

As a small farmer, and an animal scientist, with 20 years in livestock research, and 20 years working in agriculture policy in Washington DC with state departments of agriculture, I can assure you that mandating cage-free egg production is bad policy and overburdensome regulation wasting taxpayer money. The bill purports to “further the MGA’s goals to 1) protect the public health and welfare of consumers; 2) promote food safety; and 3) advance animal welfare.” However, the evidence from going cage-free does not support these goals.

There are science-based guidelines for various production practices ( United Egg Producers guidelines for both conventional and cage-free production, certifications, and animal welfare:

<https://uepcertified.com/> AND <https://www2.sustainableeggcoalition.org/> ). Current compliance with the Maryland Egg Law assures that all eggs, regardless of production method, have the same nutritional content, and are safe to eat.

With Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) cases skyrocketing in Maryland and across the U. S., a cage-free mandate is a bad move for animal health. Cage-free systems expose birds to more bacterial contamination, leading to increased hen mortality. Furthermore, an incredible

financial burden would have to be undertaken by hard-working Maryland farmers to retrofit their operations. For operations with greater than 5,000 hens, these costs can put a poultry producer out of business.

If the conventional caged alternative is removed from the market, and all producers and retailers in Maryland must supply cage-free eggs, then the average cost for eggs increases. This increase would be most detrimental to the consumers in the lowest income bracket, who rely on eggs as a cheap source of protein. Eggs and egg products from outside of Maryland may no longer be sold in our state for retail due to the cage-free mandate. The required mandate on eggs and egg product sales could be detrimental to poultry production in the entire Mid-Atlantic region – where Maryland is mandating poultry production practices to be cage-free for every state in the nation who wishes to do business with Maryland. In the end, consumers lose. The greatest impact of forcing a transition to a more expensive product with an identical nutritional profile is the disproportionate impact on Maryland's most food-insecure groups.

Currently, while eggs are in short supply due to HPAI, Marylanders have options when buying eggs in our state, including cage-free. Let us let the market and consumers decide what type of eggs they choose to buy, not under coercion by heavy-handed regulation. **That is why I am humbly asking you to oppose HB0834. Thank you and please let me know if I can be of assistance to you.**

Best regards,

Barb

**Dr. Barb Glenn  
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