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Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy and Members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Ken Pauzé and I am Assistant General Manager of Kofkoff Egg Farm.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to Raised Bill 5811, as it refers to mandating cage size for laying hens. I oppose this bill for a number of reasons.

- 1) This bill asks us to accept the assertion that the current methods of raising hens in a cage layer environment are inhumane. You may have heard or will hear testimony today based on scientific research and fact, that the guidelines that we operate by, established under the UEP Certified Program, represent a very humane method of housing laying hens. Our organization and 85% of all egg producing facilities in the United States operate under those scientific guidelines, established by an independent scientific advisory committee, designed for the humane treatment of caged layers.
- 2) Cage free eggs are available in virtually every grocery store in CT. Those items are available to all of Connecticut's consumers. Sales of those cage free and organic eggs represent approximately 5% of the total sales of eggs and are significantly more expensive than the eggs from cage laying type facilities. In fact in these economic times the demand is diminishing. In today's free marketplace the consumer decides with their wallets. The great thing about having a free marketplace is that it allows for small family operations to produce cage free, or free range eggs and be able to sell them at a profit. Currently in Connecticut there are a number of operations doing just that. Forcing this unnecessary regulation on all egg producers would strip away that niche market and cause hardship for those family farms serving those customers desiring those products.
- 3) Today's consumer is looking for locally grown food products. Whether for reasons of freshness, food safety, or concerns about the energy required to transport food from other areas of the country "Buy Local" has become very important. This legislation would force our company to move its production operations out of Connecticut eliminating the last commercial egg producer in the state.
- 4) Eggs continue to be one of the least expensive, highest quality protein sources for Connecticut families. The loss of local production and the implementation of restrictive requirements for housing laying hens would have a significant impact on the cost of those eggs to our consumers. Those most significantly impacted will be households who depend on safe, low cost sources of protein for their families, and cannot afford to pay the high cost of cage free eggs.
- 5) I believe it is very important now and in the future to recognize the intent of bills such as this. Farm Sanctuary, a known animal activist group, currently has posted the following comment on their website regarding RB 5811, stating that its result would be "effectively preventing factory egg farms from doing business in the state". We must recognize that the agenda is the elimination of animal agriculture. Connecticut, and America as a whole, is

facing a crisis in agriculture. As remaining generations of Americans become further isolated from farming, we forget the efforts that are required to feed our citizens, 3mm+ in Connecticut and over 300mm in the United States. Recently in California a referendum was passed eliminating the use of cages for laying hens in that state. I believe that is a reflection of the isolation of consumers from farming. One of our elected officials during a recent visit to California had a chance to speak to egg producers. They were very clear in stating that they were not rebuilding in California. They were moving out of state and would ship eggs into California. Our sister organization in California has walked away from a proposed \$35mm project losing over \$500k in expenses already incurred and will be looking elsewhere to be making capital investment. The resulting loss of jobs in California, both direct and indirect, tax base in the towns hosting egg laying operations, and tax revenue to the state will be enormous. We have the opportunity to avoid that mis-step here in Connecticut.

- 6) We believe that we are good neighbors in the towns we operate. We provide jobs for more than 350 individuals and their families in and around southeastern Connecticut with a payroll of approximately \$12mm. These jobs would be lost. We contribute about \$500k annually to the tax base in the towns we operate in. We are the largest taxpayer or among the largest in the towns where we have facilities. In a DECD study done in 2003 at the request of the State of Connecticut, the financial impact of our operations in Connecticut was estimated at \$161mm annually. Among the businesses we rely on and that rely on us are the railroad where we are about 40% of the business on the line servicing southeastern CT, providers of propane, heating oil, plumbing and electrical supplies, service agencies and local stores and restaurants frequented by our employees. In 2008 we purchased \$1.3mm of Connecticut grown corn for the feedmill that feeds our hens. We look forward to continuing to support local farmers. We are a community supporting each other. We work hard every day to do a great job raising our hens and making safe, locally produced eggs to bring to Connecticut's consumers. We who remain in agriculture need and appreciate your support.

Thank you for allowing me to present this testimony.

Ken Pauzé
Kofkoff Egg Farms.