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Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy and members of the Environment Committee

I would like to speak against proposed H. B. No. 5811 An Act Concerning Battery Cages and Egg Laying Hens.

Connecticut has a large poultry industry that produces millions of fresh eggs for the residents of Connecticut and other states in the northeast. These chickens are raised in cages that are designed to keep the birds healthy and the eggs they produce clean. These cages did not come into use by an arbitrary decision; they are the result of decades of scientific research. There are benefits that come from the use egg layer cages. Many of them benefit the birds. The birds are healthier with less parasites and disease leading to lower bird mortality. European countries that have banned cages found that flock mortality rates increased. The most common cause was bacterial infections caused by *E. coli*. The rate of cannibalism amongst birds is also reduced. Cannibalism is caused by dominant birds picking on the weaker birds in a flock. Humans also benefit from the layer cages because the eggs produced are able to be kept cleaner. This dramatically reduces the chance of food borne pathogens.

The ban of layer cages would mean the end of the egg industry in Connecticut. This would mean the loss of jobs and would have a negative economic impact on the state. The poultry industry also helps keep land as open space in Connecticut. Many farms grow corn and sell it to Connecticut feed mills to be made into poultry feed. The additional income from the sale of this corn helps keep these farms viable.

If this production method were cruel, mortality rates would be higher and both egg production and bodyweight would be lower. In fact, we get the opposite when cages are used in poultry production. I strongly urge the Environment Committee to defeat this bill because of the devastating effect it would have on the poultry farms in the state and because there is no scientific evidence to support such a ban.

Thank you,
William Syme