



**Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 5127 and HB 5128  
Presented to the Michigan House Agriculture Committee**

June 23, 2009

I am writing on behalf of Farm Sanctuary, the nation's leading farm animal protection organization, and our more than 200,000 members and supporters, including more than 5,000 in Michigan. I urge the committee to vote no on HB 5127 and HB 5128. These bills would create a council dominated by unelected food and agriculture industry interests to develop standards for farm animal care. In addition, these bills would create a presumption that common factory farming practices – including keeping calves raised for veal continuously tethered and crated, and crowding egg-laying hens together in constrictive battery cages – are neither cruel nor inhumane. These bills would also prohibit local governments from passing any standards that afford farm animals more protection than the industry-dominated council has deemed appropriate, and prevent the local authorities long-entrusted with enforcing animal cruelty laws from enforcing farm animal care standards. Stripping local communities of the ability to set local standards in this way is an action not to be minimized.

Such a radical attempt to take legislative, regulatory and administrative authority from the democratic bodies normally charged with creating and enforcing policies that reflect social values and handing this authority over to an industry-dominated body is both undemocratic and bad policy. The people of Michigan deserve to have a say in how farm animals are treated, and polling shows that the public overwhelmingly wants these animals to be treated more humanely than they are today. Indeed, most people support legislation that would prohibit confining farm animals in cages or crates so small they can't turn around, lie down or extend their limbs. Having rescued hundreds of farm animals over the past twenty-three years, Farm Sanctuary has seen firsthand the toll such severe confinement systems have on the health and welfare of these animals. Yet the majority of veal calves, breeding pigs and egg-laying hens are currently kept in such cruel confinement systems – evidencing the agricultural industry's inability to self-regulate.

HB 5127 and HB 5128, by codifying self-regulation and aiming to preempt standard community regulation, constitute a blatant attempt to maintain the status quo indefinitely, against the tide of public opinion. Indeed, these bills would allow producers more than ten years to come into compliance with current industry standards.

I urge you to reaffirm that it is the community's decision what standards to impose, and to reject industry's attempt to strip this decision-making authority from the people. Last month, Maine became the sixth U.S. state to enact a ban on cruel confinement systems, joining Colorado, Florida, Arizona, and Oregon. And in a landslide vote last November, residents of California, the nation's largest agriculture state, approved the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act, making it illegal to confine pigs in gestation crates, calves in

veal crates and egg-laying hens in battery cages. I urge the committee to follow the will of the community and the example of sensible lawmakers and voters in other states by enacting laws that codify humane societal values – and by rejecting HB 5127 and HB 5128.

For the reasons stated above, Farm Sanctuary strongly opposes HB 5127 and HB 5128. and urges the committee to vote no on these bills.

Sincerely,

Delcianna Winders  
Director of Legal Campaigns