



June 24, 2008

**Testimony of The Animals and Society Institute
Presented to the Michigan House Agriculture Committee
In Opposition to H.B. 5127 & H.B. 5128, June 24, 2009**

The Animals and Society Institute is an independent research and educational organization located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Our mission is to advance animal issues in public policy and promote the study of human-animal relationships.

The ASI is opposed to the proposed legislation, both on procedural and substantive grounds, and urges the committee to vote **no** on both bills.

Our procedural objections are based on the fact that a bill introduced one day, with a committee hearing scheduled for the following day, does not give sufficient time to review and consider the implications, particularly when the subject matter is complex.

More importantly, we object to the provisions of the bills because they exclusively promote the interests of agribusiness and:

- Codify existing factory farming (CAFO) practices which have a negative impact on human health, the environment as well as the animals
- Preempt local standards in communities which have adopted stricter guidelines in response to citizens' concerns about the effects of unfettered factory farming

The manner in which the food consumed by Michigan citizens is produced is a matter of increasing concern, and the legislature abdicates its responsibility when it fails to consider the public policy implications of continuing the current system of self-regulation of animal agriculture standards and allowing powerful economic interests to drown out the voices of Michigan citizens, and indeed, small farmers (the most recent Task Force Committee charged with development and review of GAAMPS for farmed animals estimated approximately 50,000 farms in the state).

The Animals and Society Institute has published The Animals' Platform, a blueprint that can be used at the local, state and national level to promote new and stricter animal protection legislation and policy. Our *Animals in Agriculture* platform makes the following points about factory farming practices, and paints a picture of a complex set of issues. The bills under review simply do not consider the implications of the following:

Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), or "factory farms," are industrial farming enterprises that involve the largest number of animals commercially raised for any form of human use.

Inhumane living conditions for these animals are the inevitable result of intensive confinement practices where the objective is to produce as quickly as possible the greatest profit by raising the largest number in the smallest amount of space using the least resources with the exception of water. Consequently, intensively reared animals are routinely given feed laced with antibiotics (to speed growth rates and prevent disease) and are subjected to cruel practices to counter self-imposed abnormal behavior directly caused by their confinement (e.g., debarking egg-laying hens to prevent stress-induced fighting; docking tails of pigs to prevent tail-chewing).

There is also emerging a broad coalition of movements opposing CAFOs. For example, environmental protection organizations have expressed strong concern over the extensive air, water and soil pollution caused by CAFOs. Other organizations, like The American Public Health Association, have urged the imposition of a moratorium on new CAFOs until public health concerns have been adequately addressed. The Worldwatch Institute challenges CAFOs based on their inefficiency in converting vegetable protein into animal protein, disproportionate use of water to produce food, and contribution to the continuation of world hunger. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognizes CAFOs as sources of water pollution under its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit program.

For these reasons, the Animals and Society Institute urges a "no" vote on HB 5127 and 5128.

Very truly yours,

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