

Michigan House of Representatives
Agriculture Committee
Chair: The Honorable Mike Simpson

Good morning, I am George House, Executive Director of Michigan Allied Poultry Industries. I represent the broiler, egg laying and turkey farmers in the state of Michigan. I have represented the poultry farmers for seven years; prior to that I had a 40 year career in agricultural lending, primarily with the Federal Farm Credit system.

I wish to speak in support of House Bills 5127 and 5128. These two bills will regulate the animal care and welfare practices of all farm operators. The bills will make the animal welfare standards and guidelines of the United Egg Producers, as to laying hens, the National Turkey Federation as to turkeys and the United Chicken Council as to broilers become the standards for Michigan animal care for the poultry industry.

There are concerns addressed within this Committee and by various interest groups. The major areas cited include:

1. The molting practices of the egg laying industry. Effective on January 1, 2006 the withdrawal of feed and water to induce molting of laying hens was no longer permitted. The birds receive adequate water and fed a diet which is high in fiber and lower in protein and energy which causes them to molt. This is a natural process which occurs in birds in nature and is driven by the hours of daylight they receive. The laying hens have the hours of light reduced from 14 hours per day to no more than 8 hours.
2. There is concern regarding whether the animal care rules from industry are guidelines or requirements. Because all the major food chains and quick serve restaurants have demanded that poultry and poultry products be produced under these requirements the "guidelines" are in fact required for virtually all the poultry industry.
3. The egg producing industry presently requires independent third party audit of space requirements per bird and documented molting records that record weight loss, feed ration fed and lighting patterns to induce the molt. The process requires 20 days and bird weights are taken each day to assure the process does not cause more than normal mortality which is approximately 3%.
4. Layer, broiler and turkey houses all have major air movement systems which assure that the birds are given air quality which would comply with human air quality standards.
5. This bill does not address the size of farm issue or the water quality issue. The water quality issue is adequately addressed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality with comprehensive nutrient management plans and a requirement to immediately report any discharge to the DEQ.
6. These bills represent a sensible compromise to provide low cost, high quality protein to all consumers while simultaneously addressing the welfare of farm production birds. Every solution must have tradeoffs and the need to provide reasonable cost food to Michigan consumers supports the need to enact House Bill 5127 and 5128.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on this very important issue.

Mr. Chairman I would be happy to entertain any questions which committee members may have.

June 25, 2009 Public Hearing, HB #5127 & HB #5128