

# United Poultry Concerns

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## **United Poultry Concerns Supports Delaware Bill to Give Egg-Laying Hens More Space**

Today a bill will be heard by the Delaware Senate Agriculture Committee designed to provide more space for caged egg-laying hens in the state. Enacted into law, Senate Bill 253, introduced by Del. Senator Karen Peterson, would require that caged egg-laying hens have sufficient living space per hen to allow each hen to fully extend all limbs without touching the sides of the living space.

In an April 12 letter to Senator Peterson and the Senate Agriculture Committee, United Poultry Concerns (UPC) expressed support for the proposed legislation as an important animal welfare measure with potential to improve the lives of thousands of egg-laying hens in Delaware while providing a model for other states.

Under current living conditions, caged egg-laying hens in the U.S. are typically confined within a space no larger and often less than 61 square inches per hen in cages holding an average of eight tightly squeezed hens. Such confinement restricts hens' ability to perform basic behaviors including wing flapping and head and leg stretching, which hens in less-restricted spaces perform frequently throughout the day. The standard 61 sq. inches per hen does not even allow egg-laying hens to stand fully upright, UPC explained to legislators.

In addition, the effect of continuous rubbing of the hen's body against cage wires and against adjacent hens causes body sores and feather loss, said UPC. At a meeting with egg industry leaders in Nov. 2002, farm animal expert Dr. Temple Grandin of Colorado State University criticized the fact that egg-laying hens are crammed so tightly in the cages that half their feathers are missing. Laying hens without feathers are "not normal" and "the situation has to change," Dr. Grandin told the meeting, according to UPC.

Enacted into law, Senate Bill 253 would be a giant welfare step for egg-laying hens in Delaware while setting a precedent for other states to follow. "UPC is extremely grateful to Senator Karen Peterson for introducing this groundbreaking bill to reduce the suffering of thousands of caged egg-laying hens," said UPC president Karen Davis. "UPC supports this bill," Davis said.