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TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN H.B. 5987
Vicki Deisner, Midwest Legislative Director, ASPCA
Before the Michigan House Agriculture Standing Committee
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Chairman Lauwers and distinguished members of the House Agriculture Standing Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, the Midwest Legislative Director for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). On behalf of our approximately 2.5 million members and supporters we respectfully urge the House Agricultural Standing Committee to vote no on H.B. 5987.

In 2009, Michigan passed H.B. 5127, banning highly restrictive caging and crating that virtually immobilize animals raised for food, posing problems for animal welfare as well as other interests such as worker and public health. The law passed with the support of agricultural and environmental groups, joining the growing list of states that had already banned the tight confinement of egg-laying hens, veal calves and pregnant pigs. Now, some three years from the implementation deadlines that will benefit pigs and hens, H.B. 5987 proposes a delay.

H.B. 5127 gave Michigan's pork and egg industries a decade – until 2019 – to replace their restrictive caging systems with more humane alternatives. In the seven years since, the market has moved forward with similar bans, with producers, retailers and food service companies all pledging to use better options, some having already done so. Additionally, the trend of state bans continues: two more states have banned gestation crates for pregnant pigs, and three more have banned battery cages for egg-laying hens.

For the millions of farm animals raised in Michigan, this is an essential bill that ensures modest standards. Pigs and chickens have basic natural instincts to rooting, scratch, perch and nest. For those kept in cages, daily life is limited to a space so small they can barely take a step in any direction, causing a vast array of physical and psychological problems. Each day this continues is a day too long for these inherently social, active animals.

Further, an extension would be unprecedented. Of the 11 states that have now passed a total of 19 confinement bans, none has extended its phase-out period. Eight bans have since gone into effect.



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The ASPCA appreciates the realities of replacing cage-based farming systems with alternatives. However, basic welfare improvements can and must be accomplished. The ten years that Michigan has given itself to reach this goal is already ten years longer than any animal should have to live barely able to move, and no effort should be spared to reach Michigan's already committed-to deadlines.

For all of these reasons, the ASPCA respectfully urges the House Agriculture Standing Committee to reject H.B. 5987, a bill that would derail Michigan's historic commitment to animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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