

*Senator Jeffrey Timberlake  
Assistant Republican Leader  
3 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0003  
(207) 287-1505*

*Jeffrey.Timberlake@legislature.maine.gov*

*Testimony of Senator Jeffrey Timberlake on  
LD 2084 "An Act Prohibiting Certain Confinement of Egg-laying Hens and the Sale  
of Their Eggs"*

*February 11, 2020*

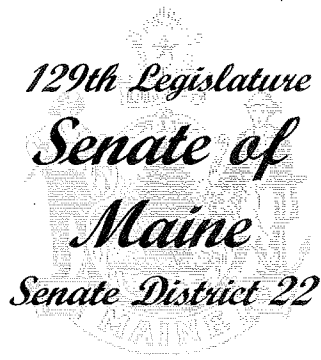
*Before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee*

---

Senator Dill, Representative Hickman and members on the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Jeff Timberlake and I am here to testify in opposition to LD 2084.

I grew up working at DeCoster egg farm when I was a young man. The community grew up working at DeCoster and some still do. As with any job, the paychecks go towards college funds, clothes, braces and every day expenses. This bill harms an industry that provides jobs to many Maine families. I only worked at DeCoster because I was chasing a certain young lady, who is now my wife of 42 years.

DeCoster back in its prime was housing over 5 million chickens and was the largest brown egg producer in the world. They are now down to around 1 million, and dropping. This bill, whether it intended to or not would actively destroy what is left of the agriculture industry in Maine. Most farmers in Maine, from dairy to fruit and vegetable relies on Hillandale (formerly DeCoster) for their fertilizer. If Hillandale were to shut down, most of these farmers would be closing shortly behind them due to the fact that they could not afford to buy commercial fertilizer to grow their crops. The only reason this bill is before you is because Katie Hansberry from the Humane Society and Bill Bell from the Brown Egg Industry threatened Steve Vendemia of Hillandale, that if he did not support this bill that a referendum would be initiated in its place. Steve told me this himself. In a conference call yesterday I learned that the very earliest they could convert Turner into a cage free facility is 10 years. If you pass this bill, you are signing a death certificate for this farm and all other surrounding farms.



*Senator Jeffrey Timberlake  
Assistant Republican Leader  
3 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0003  
(207) 287-1505*

*Jeffrey.Timberlake@legislature.maine.gov*

I find it asinine that the amendment proposes Hillandale can sell its eggs to anyone but Mainers. This continues the same practices the bill is aimed against and only punishes Maine people from being able to buy them. Legislation like this perpetuates the reality that more regulation makes it harder to work, live, and run a business in Maine.

As farmers, we will accept the amendment to keep Hillandale afloat, but this whole law needs to be voted ought not to pass. Let the people of Maine decide if they want to buy cage free eggs for \$3.99 a dozen or caged eggs for 99¢ a dozen. What do you suggest we tell those living on a fixed income where 'egg' is their prime source of protein? This bill is bad in so many ways I could go on for an hour. I would like to know why the bill sponsor did not come to me or Representative Morris and ask our thoughts on this bill which causes an extreme change to a major business in our district. This bill puts Turner and Leeds biggest employer and largest tax payer out of business.

Based on everything I have stated in my testimony, I respectfully ask that you vote this bill ought not to pass. Voting this bill down saves jobs, tax dollars, and keeps money in the pockets of Mainers.