

Chicken Testimony

I am Margaret Kramar and thank you for the privilege of testifying against this bill. As the owners of Hidden Hollow Farm, a 150-flock free-range laying operation, we have had experience with chickens.

Of course we are united in wanting to bring economic opportunities to Kansas, but how low are we willing to go to pursue that objective? Would we stop at nothing?

Would you consider a career of slaughtering chickens all day? If not, why would you wish it on others? Most native-born Americans will not work these jobs, so slaughterhouses are dependent on immigrant labor. If this facility comes to a small community with a homogenous population, the schools will have to set up ESL (English as a Second Language) programs, and will need to provide additional services for these children and their families. Regardless of where you stand on this issue, whether you would welcome all immigrants with open arms or want to build a wall, this issue has caused considerable trouble and divisiveness in this country. By encouraging this facility, you are contributing to that problem.

If these slaughter houses and confined animal feeding operations come into existence, will the news media and other interested parties be allowed to come in and document what they find? Because of the Ag Gag laws in Kansas, I suspect that the answer is no. So you might ask yourself, what are they hiding? The majority of Kansans, now several generations removed from the farm, have absolutely no idea where their food comes from, and if many of them did know, they would not eat it. Therefore, if you are in favor of these facilities, you are complicit in exploiting their ignorance.

Finally, I want to relay a personal story. Every spring we order an assortment of laying-breed chicks, and several years ago a batch of Cornish X chicks got mixed in with our order by mistake. This breed, or a variant of it, populate the broiler chicken houses. When they arrived, the Cornish X were yellow, fuzzy chicks, indistinguishable from the rest. Within a week or two, the Cornish X chicks were twice as big as the other chicks, and pink, fat and bald, with only a few wisps of white feathers. They were growing so fast that their bodies could not feather themselves properly. Next, some of these chicks actually ate themselves to death! They were so programmed to put on weight quickly that they did not know when to stop eating. With any other chicken, you fill the troughs in the morning, they have free choice all day, and you fill them again the next day. With Cornish X, the literature says to provide the feed and then take it away, or they will eat themselves to death as some of these did. Further, a typical chicken can fly six feet into the air if it wants to get out of the fence, and once loose, runs and darts around so fast that unless you are a sixteen-year-old kid who can run and dart as fast as the chicken, it takes several people to corner and catch it. These Cornish X chicks walked one step, then plopped down. Or walked two steps, then plopped down. They were so fat and heavy that they lacked mobility. These poor little guys have been genetically engineered so that they are no longer chickens. Then they live short, miserable lives in crowded facilities and are slaughtered at about twenty-six weeks. Although they are sentient beings capable of learning and possessing distinct personalities, much like your dog or cat, they are relegated to being nothing more than an economic unit of production.

I would argue that sometimes compassion should take precedence over profit. Please oppose this bill, if not for the people, for the animals, and if not for the animals, for the people growing and slaughtering the chickens.