

Good afternoon! My name is Hari Dandapani.

I am here before you to advocate for a cause that speaks to the values of compassion, peace, and justice. I am here today to urge you to support HB7056—the ban on the sale of foie gras in Rhode Island.

Foie gras, translated as “fatty liver” in French, is a controversial food made from the artificially enlarged livers of force-fed ducks and geese. The production process involves the inhumane practice of gavage, which entails force-feeding birds enormous quantities of food through a metal tube inserted through their throats and into their stomach. This unnatural and painful process causes the animal’s liver to swell to several times its normal size, resulting in severe suffering and distress for these animals. Many are rendered unable to walk after being force fed over and over again, and the gruesome footage that shows gavage in factory farms shows these poor birds doing everything they can to evade the feeding tube. To give you a sense of how uniquely cruel gavage is, when done on political prisoners, it is considered a form of torture and has been condemned by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Studies and investigations have consistently revealed the immense pain and suffering endured by ducks and geese during foie gras production. These birds are subjected to constant physical discomfort, distress, and an increased risk of diseases due to their force-fed diets. The unnatural feeding process can cause injuries to their throats, difficulty in breathing, and liver diseases, ultimately leading to a reduced quality of life and premature death.

Moreover, the foie gras industry has been deemed inhumane and has faced bans or restrictions in several places, including parts of Europe, as well as in California and New York. By banning the sale of foie gras in Rhode Island, we would join the ranks of those who recognize the ethical necessity of eliminating such unnecessary cruelty from our culinary practices.

Additionally, a ban on foie gras aligns with consumer preferences and changing attitudes towards animal welfare. People are becoming more conscious of their food choices and are increasingly demanding products that are produced in an ethical and sustainable manner. By banning the sale of foie gras, Rhode Island would send a strong message that we prioritize the welfare of animals and are committed to promoting a more compassionate society.

Rhode Island is a state that upholds principles of compassion and ethical treatment of animals. We have passed laws and regulations to ensure that animals are protected from excessive harm and cruelty. However, the sale of foie gras contradicts these values and supports an industry built upon the ultimately avoidable suffering of innocent creatures.

Today, you all have the opportunity to take a stand against the inhumane practice of foie gras production by banning its sale. By doing so, we would demonstrate our commitment to compassion, animal welfare, and the values that define our great state. Let us lead the way in ensuring that our culinary traditions evolve in harmony with our shared sense of morality.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that you can please support and advance HB7056.