

Submitted via email to HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Time & Location: 6:00pm, Room 35 – State House

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Submitted by: Will Lowrey, Legal Counsel, Animal Outlook, 804-307-4102

RE: Testimony in strong support of H 5731: Prohibiting the sale of force-fed poultry products

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of Animal Outlook, I respectfully submit the following testimony to strongly **urge you to vote “Yes” on H 5731** which is currently scheduled for hearing on March 24, 2021 before the House Judiciary Committee.

Founded in 1995, Animal Outlook (formerly Compassion Over Killing) is a national 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to exposing truth and inspiring change. Every day, Animal Outlook advocates against government policies that encourage or allow cruelty to farmed animals, conducts public education on the realities of industrialized animal agriculture, coordinates public campaigns to encourage the adoption of vegan diets, and conducts undercover investigations to expose cruelty at industrialized factory farms.

H 5731 is common sense legislation aimed at ending Rhode Island’s participation in a cruel industry. If passed, this bill will prevent retail food establishments from selling or storing foie gras and impose a civil penalty of \$500 on those violating the law.

Foie gras, or “fat liver,” is the French term for the fattened, diseased liver of a duck or goose, served around the world as a purported delicacy. To produce foie gras, geese and ducks are confined in small cages or pens and force-fed abnormally large quantities of food, causing their livers to become diseased and swell up to ten times the normal size.¹ This repetitive force feeding can cause serious esophageal injury to the birds, including tissue damage and severe pain.² In addition, many birds suffer trauma from the injection of high-temperature corn mash

¹ W. Skippon, *The animal health and welfare consequences of foie gras production*, 54 Can. Vet. J. 4 (2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3595949/> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

² *Ibid.*

down their throats.³ Force-fed birds often experience posture and gait abnormalities along with wing lesions and severe dermatitis.⁴ After several weeks of painful force-feeding, the birds are hung from shackles and slaughtered.⁵ The image below⁶ depicts a typical force feeding.



Animal Outlook has witnessed firsthand the suffering of animals used by the foie gras industry at the nation's largest foie gras factory farm, Hudson Valley Foie Gras in upstate New York, a farm that raises approximately 350,000 birds each year⁷ for foie gras production. Our [undercover investigation](#) revealed the cruelties inherent to this practice, including terrified birds crowding into the corners of their small, barren cages attempting to escape force feeding, pipes being

³ HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES, *An HSUS Report: The Welfare of Animals in the Foie Gras Industry*, Mar. 2012, <https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/hsus-report-welfare-foie-gras-industry.pdf> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

⁴ I. Rochlitz, *The welfare of ducks during foie gras production*, 26 *Animal Welfare J.* 2 (2017).

⁵ W. Skippon, *The animal health and welfare consequences of foie gras production*, 54 *Can. Vet. J.* 4 (2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3595949/> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

⁶ NYC FOIE GRAS, *Foie Gras, a product of cruelty*, <https://www.nycfoiegras.com/> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

⁷ TIMES HERALD-RECORD, *NYC foie gras ban endangers Sullivan County farms*, Oct. 30, 2019, <https://www.recordonline.com/news/20191030/nyc-foie-gras-ban-endangers-sullivan-county-farms> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

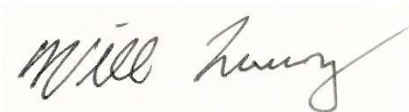
shoved down their throats to pump food into their stomachs, and birds shackled upside down waiting for their throats to be slit.⁸

H 5731 is essential to the welfare of countless birds subjected to the cruel foie gras industry. This bill will effectively ensure that Rhode Island no longer participates in this barbaric practice and that companies profiting from the misery of ducks and geese subjected to brutal force feeding will have no home for their cruelly-produced products in the state.

The recognition that ducks and geese should not be subjected to such cruel practices is not unique to Rhode Island. The production and/or sale of foie gras has been banned in numerous countries, including Argentina, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.⁹ Domestically, the New York City Council overwhelmingly voted in 2019 for a ban on the sale of foie gras that was soon enacted into law.¹⁰

Having documented firsthand the abject suffering of force-fed birds, Animal Outlook **strongly and respectfully urges you to pass H 5731** and end the sale of foie gras products in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will Lowrey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Will Lowrey
Counsel
Animal Outlook

⁸ ANIMAL OUTLOOK, *Hudson Valley Foie Gras*, <https://animaloutlook.org/investigations/hudson-valley/> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

⁹ T. Jenkins, FINE DINING LOVERS, *Foie Gras: Where is it actually banned?*, May 16, 2016, <https://www.finedininglovers.com/article/foie-gras-where-it-actually-banned> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).

¹⁰ J. Mays, NEW YORK TIMES, *Foie Gras, Served in 1,000 Restaurants in New York City, Is Banned*, Oct. 30, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/30/nyregion/foie-gras-ban-nyc.html> (last visited Mar. 15, 2021).