

House Bill 507 - Proponent Testimony
Ohio House of Representatives - Agriculture and Conservation Committee
Jim Chakeres, Executive Vice President
Ohio Poultry Association

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech and Ranking Minority Member Brent, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 507. My name is Jim Chakeres and I am the Executive Vice President for the Ohio Poultry Association which represents Ohio's egg, turkey and chicken farmers. The Ohio Poultry Association is also the official state agency in Ohio for the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). NPIP sets standards and certifies flocks to be free of disease. We do this by routine testing of flocks and inspections of farms including hatcheries. The health of Ohio's poultry industry begins with our breeder flocks and hatcheries.

The Ohio Poultry Association has a vested interest in HB 507. Many years ago, the Ohio legislature provided for standards for the sale of day old poultry and rabbits. At the time, it was quite common to purchase young chicks and rabbits as Easter holiday gifts for children. These birds and bunnies were often dyed the colors of the rainbow. Obviously, this practice is not in the best interest of animal welfare. However, the requirement to purchase these animals in lots of six practically eliminated this practice.

This statute was also put in place to provide for better welfare for the young animals. The day-old chicks are often shipped via the United States Postal Service. Minimum lots of six chicks provided for group body heat during fluctuating spring temperatures.

Today, we are not concerned with either of these original, practical reasons to limit the number to six as dyed chicks are no longer commercially sold and shipping practices have also evolved. Hatcheries have self-imposed policies of shipping minimums (10, 16, 20+) during lower temperature forecasts and the hatcheries also use heat packs today that were not available years ago.

We are grateful that Chair Koehler reached out to the Association to discuss this change in the law. We have given much thought to what should be the minimum number for shipment. Our primary concern is young bird welfare. After consulting with veterinarians, animal scientists at the Ohio State University, and hatchery professionals, we believe that number should be three chicks. Birds, especially young birds, do better in groups, than when shipped or housed as a single.

The Ohio Poultry Association supports HB 507 and the provision that lowers the minimum number of poultry sold from six to three. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.