

Senate Agriculture Committee

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Assembly Agriculture Committee

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**RE: A10399/S08291**

Dear Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committee Members:

We, the undersigned organizations urge you to vote against and reject legislative bills A10399/S08291 (the “Bill”) that seek to shutter poultry and other live animal shops (collectively “poultry shops”) that are a vital source of income and food production for thousands of immigrant and religious New Yorkers. Disappointingly, this Bill seeks to scapegoat poultry and butcher shops in New York State—New York City in particular—for a public health pandemic that began over 7,000 miles away.

New York poultry shops have been around for hundreds of years and are vital to the City of New York as many groups prefer to eat fresh poultry and meat that they can inspect themselves and also process in accordance to their cultural or religious beliefs.

Live poultry shops are a vital source of income for many New Yorkers. In New York City, there are almost 100 shops employing hundreds and feeding thousands more. This Bill seeks to create a false equivalence in connecting wet markets outside the country with the well-regulated live poultry industry in New York. New York poultry and live animal shops are some of the most heavily regulated live animal markets in the world. New York’s poultry shops do not sell exotic or wild caught animals. Rather, New York’s poultry shops only sell livestock that are permitted under United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) regulations. Poultry shops in New York sell livestock that are treated with antibiotics and are tested by the USDA at multiple stages before the product is sold to the consumer. Poultry shops are required to document all livestock if there is a need to back trace to prevent the spread of any virus or bacteria or for recall purposes. New York poultry shops are already subject to continuous inspections at random by Federal, State, and local authorities. Poultry shops are swabbed and tested on a regular basis. Poultry shops that accrue violations or fail to maintain sanitary conditions are subject to increasing fines, inspections, and closure under current laws and regulations. Additionally, New York’s poultry shops do not operate in open settings. Moreover, current law already bans new live animal markets from opening within 1,500 feet of a residence for health and safety reasons in New York City. *See* N.Y. Agric. & Mkts. Law § 96-B.

This Bill will be an economic disaster for thousands of families. Banning live poultry shops will mean that poultry shop owners will lose their businesses in the middle of a pandemic. Employees will lose their paychecks, hatcheries, farmers, animal feed stores and mills will go out of business, and drivers and food distributors will lose their customers and terminate employees too. Moreover, the retroactive

application of this Bill to pre-existing business is unjust. This Bill will only do harm to the thousands of New Yorkers that rely on live poultry shops for their daily food source and livelihood.

The Bill will also have a disparate impact on immigrant and religious communities. The overwhelming majority of live poultry shops serve immigrants, Muslims, and Jews. For example, immigrants from the Caribbean, West India, Asia, Latin American, and Africa traditionally inspect and select their livestock. Moreover, immigrants from these regions seek poultry that is not commonly found or readily available in markets, such as Roosters, Red Fowls, and Guinea Hens.

For many Muslim and Jewish New Yorkers live poultry shops are the only accessible sources to meet their religious dietary needs—halal and kosher meat products. Moreover, this Bill will result in a ban of certain religious practices that are central to both the Muslim and Jewish faith traditions.

In the Muslim faith, Muslims traditionally inspect the livestock before an animal is slaughtered and must be prepared in a way that is permissible to eat, halal. Supermarkets and other meat shops generally do not offer halal products, or the halal products are expensive or not readily accessible. Muslims also celebrate their holiest religious holiday Eid al-Adha, also called the “Festival of the Sacrifice.” Eid al-Adha honors Prophet Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God’s command. During Eid al-Adha, Muslims similarly sacrifice livestock, usually a sheep, goat, or cow, and the meat is distributed among family members, the community and the poor. As of 2016, there are more than 760,000 Muslims residing in New York City and over 1 million in New York State.<sup>1</sup>

In the Jewish community, members utilize live markets for their practice of Kaporos before Yom Kippur. The NYC Health Department has always maintained that “the annual Kaporos ritual does not pose a significant threat to human health.”<sup>2</sup> In 2016, researchers have found that 1 in 10 New Yorkers is Jewish. New York State has about 1.75 million Jews, comprising approximately 9 percent of its total population—with over 1 million living in NYC.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to violating the religious rights of Muslims and Jews, this Bill poses a significant risk to the public health. Families will undoubtedly seek to slaughter their own poultry and livestock in their basements or backyards if their local poultry shop is shut down.

Ironically, this Bill seeks to shut down the same poultry shops that are providing free meat products to communities and first responders during this COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Without these live poultry

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Social Policy and Understanding:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/584f0e56ebbd1ae235d63da5/t/5b8715422b6a28488420ad85/1535579470630/MAP-NY-Key-Findings-Web.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/animal-rights-activists-face-jewish-community-over-treatment-chickens-during-kaporos>

<sup>3</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency: <https://www.jta.org/2016/04/18/politics/7-things-to-know-about-the-jews-of-new-york-for-tuesdays-primary>

<sup>4</sup> Live poultry shops have partnered with the following to provide fresh foods and hot meals during covid-19: NYU Langone Hospital Cobblehil; NYU Langone Hospital Lutheran; NYU Langone Perelman NYC; NY Presbyterian Hospital; Bellevue Hospital; Stoney Brook Hospital; Interfaith Hospital; Coney Island Hospital; Maimonides Hospital; NYU Clinic (Covid Center); The Brooklyn Hospital; Harlem Hospital; SUNY Downstate; Mount Sinai Hospital; Kings County Hospital; Queens Hospital; Elmhurst Hospital; Jamaica

markets, many New Yorkers would not have had any food to eat during this pandemic. As COVID-19 continues to disturb the national food chain, live poultry shops are even more important as they have remained open to provide local communities with essentials from meat and poultry to eggs and milk. Shuttering live poultry shops will only add to the food shortages and contribute to the raising costs of meat products.

Live poultry shops are an integral part of our communities and are the only available source of fresh chicken and meat for certain families. This Bill is an affront to our communities and seeks to malign New York poultry shops by falsely equating heavily regulated markets in New York with those outside the country. Legislators should not use this public health crisis to further their political agendas.

We call on you to vote against and reject this Bill in committee, without delay. Should you seek additional information or testimony, please contact Ahmed Mohamed at [ahmedmohamed@cair.com](mailto:ahmedmohamed@cair.com).

Sincerely,

African Immigrants Commission of NY & CT Onc.  
Ahlul Bayt Mosque  
Al Badiya Halal Poultry Farm  
Al Furqan Jame Masjid  
American Pakistani Public Affairs Committee  
Assafa Islamic Center  
Baitul Hamd Institute  
Baitul Islam Masjid and Community Center Bronx NY  
Bangladeshi American community Council (BACC)  
Bangladeshi Americans Advocacy Group Inc  
BIA  
Brooklyn Islamic Center  
CAIR-New York  
College Point Islamic Center  
Dawah Unlimited Alliance  
District Leader, Assembly District 31  
Ecclesia Ministries of New York  
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition  
Harlem Islamic Community  
ICNA  
Islamic Center of South Shore - Masjid Hamza  
Islamic Circle of North America - New York Chapter  
Islamic Civic Association  
Jamaica Archer Halal Live Poultry and Meat Market

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Hospital; NYPD 68 Precinct; NYPD 76 Precinct; NYPD 60 Precinct; NYPD 61 Precinct; NYPD 62 Precinct; NYPD 66 Precinct NYPD 72 Precinct; NYPD 78 Precinct; NYPD 32 Precinct; NYPD 84 Precinct; NYPD 69 Precinct; NYPD ESU; NYPD Detective squad NYC; NYPD Detective squad BK; FDNY Brooklyn Heights; FDNY Bay Ridge; FDNY Sunset; FDNY EMT St Edwards St; and FDNY EMT Tillary.

Joloff Restaurant 2 Inc  
Majlis Ash-Shura: Islamic Leadership Council of New York  
Masjid Arqam  
Masjid At-Taqwa  
Masjid Bab Salam  
Masjid Darul Quran  
Masjid Ebul Abbass  
Mid Hudson Islamic Association  
Mimar Sinan Sunnyside Mosque  
Muna Center of Ozone Park Baitun Noor Masjid  
Muridiyya International Sufi School  
MusCare  
Muslim Community Center of Richmond Hill  
Muslim Community Forum  
Muslim Political Club  
Muslims for Liberty  
Muslims Giving Back  
New York Immigration Coalition  
New York Muslim United for civic engagement  
NY Muslim United for Civic Engagement (NYMUCE)  
NY Poultry & Livestock  
New Sanctuary Coalition  
Street Vendor Project  
The Gambian Youth Organization  
theAbrar Inc  
United Ulama Council of USA INC  
US First Choice Inc  
Yemeni American Merchants Association  
Zamzam Poultry