



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 19, 2020

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats- Prohibited Acts – HB 445- Support

Chairman Barve, Vice Chairman Stein, members of the Environment & Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the House Environment & Transportation Committee vote favorably for Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats- Prohibited Acts – HB 445.

The most frequent type of declawing is called an onychectomy, which involves cutting off the bones from which a cat's claws grow with a scalpel or laser.

Think of surgically amputating a person's fingers or toes at their top joint. Studies have found that declawed cats have a higher percentage of a stress hormone, cortisol, which is often associated with pain. Scans of declawed cat paws often detect leftover bone fragments from the surgery. This can make it painful for these cats as they step on these tiny bone fragments when they walk.

Cats can continue to feel pain after the declawing procedure. Part of a cat's weight is distributed on its toes - so after the declawing process their gait must change to redistribute their weight through their paws. Declawing can affect a cat's balance. Cats rely on their paws, and claws, for behavioral and grooming needs. Their claws help them to protect and defend themselves.

Studies suggest that declawed cats are more likely to have health problems, such as back pain, or behavioral problems, such as aggression. Declawing is a surgical procedure, so cats are at risk for surgical complications such as excessive bleeding, swelling, infections, paw pad lacerations, nerve damage, lameness, and chronic pain. Even using the litter box can be painful on declawed paws.

There are times when this procedure is necessary. This bill does allow veterinarians to do this procedure for medical reasons, such as a severely infected nail bed or tumor.

New York recently passed a law to ban declawing. Declawing is outlawed in nine U.S. cities—Denver, Colorado and eight cities in California—and in the Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. Cat declawing is already illegal in many countries in Europe, including the UK, as well as Brazil, Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

Our cats look up to us and count on us to care for and protect them. Declawing is an act of mutilation that should not be done for our benefit. There are far more humane, inexpensive, and effective ways to stop our cats from scratching the furniture.

In closing, I would like to thank Delegate Charkoudian for her sponsorship of HB 445 and ask the committee to give this bill a favorable report.

Let Kindness Reign, Vote Humane

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