

DELIVERED VIA ELECTRONIC CORRESPONDENCE

WRITTEN TESTIMONY in SUPPORT of HB 445 to Prohibit Declawing of Cats– Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 17, 2020

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee:

I am submitting this letter to you as written testimony for the public hearing regarding Maryland HB 445, to urge you to support this critical bill to prohibit the declawing of cats, a practice that has negative effects on a cat's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Cats need their claws and cats need to scratch.

I am the president and founder of Alley Cat Allies. Founded in 1990, we are the leading advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and improving cats' lives and have more than 40,000 supporters in Maryland. We work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public to change attitudes and advance lifesaving policies that best serve the interests of cats and communities.

Declawing, an amputation also known as onychectomy, is not done for medical purposes. The most common reason for this non-therapeutic surgery is the protection of furniture. However, there are inexpensive and effective deterrents to redirect a cat's natural scratching behavior, such as regular nail trims, nail caps, deterrent sprays, and even training the cat to scratch in appropriate areas.

Declawing will not keep more cats in homes—a fact that the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) acknowledges. A recent study found that the primary reasons people relinquish their pets are behavioral issues and medical costs that are direct consequences of declawing. These issues include, and are not limited to, increased biting, litter box avoidance, chronic pain, balance issues, arthritis, and back problems.

Declawing does not protect human health. The National Institutes of Health, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Public Health Service, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the Canadian Medical Association all have specifically stated that declawing is "not advised" even for the cats of persons who are severely immunocompromised, including those with HIV.

There is never a reason to remove a cat's claws, which are an essential part of her anatomy, unless a medical procedure is necessary to improve her health. That procedure would not be declawing as

we know it. That is why we support Maryland enacting a declaw ban like those in place in New York State, seven of the ten Canadian provinces, eight cities in California, St. Louis, Missouri, and the City and County of Denver, Colorado.

Declawing is not performed in most of the world. Please ensure Maryland can join those many, many humane communities. Please support HB 445 and ban declawing.

Thank you for your consideration.

For the cats,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B" and "R".

Becky Robinson

President and Founder