

House bill HB 445 Animal Welfare - Declawing Cats - Prohibited Acts
February, 19th, 2020

Good afternoon, my name is Sophia Rasin Rubin, and I am a student at the Park School Of Baltimore. At Park, we have a project called Advocate, where we get to choose a topic that we are passionate about, and advocate for the cause. For my project I choose declawing.

I first became interested in this issue in 2017, when I adopted my cat, Laura Waffles, from the Baltimore Humane Society. She had been declawed by her previous owners, and returned to a rescue that then sent her to that shelter. I think of her like a sister, and it pains me to see her walk on her arthritic, mangled paws. She is unable to jump onto furniture, and calls to me to place her on it, causing unnecessary dependency on people, and depriving her of the ability to fulfill basic cat behaviors.

Declawing is an easy way for people who have supposedly committed themselves to animal welfare to profit off of cat suffering. After the surgery, the cats are kept in small cages, lying on hard metal, with paws wrapped in bloody bandages, in intense pain. Vets would never allow cat owners to see them in this state, so they are kept there for the brutal first few days of recovery. It is not an accident that the owners do not see this, neither is it that many people do not know that declawing is not just the removal of the claw. It is the removal of the bone that the claw grows from, which is cut at the joint by modified nail clippers. They also cut the tendons that grow alongside that bone. This is the equivalent to cutting our fingers at the first knuckle.

It has been proven that declawed cats have higher levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. While it is argued that declawing cats keeps them in homes, declawing makes these defenseless cats prone to arthritis, chronic pain, and aggression, i.e. biting. Cat litter often causes pain for declawed cats, making them more likely to seek out softer spaces to urinate and defecate. This combination makes the cats less desirable for potential owners. Vets often recommend that cats be declawed so that people who are on blood thinners or are immunocompromised are not put at risk. But, The American Center For Disease Prevention does not recommend declawing, and says that cat bites, feces, and urine pose bigger health threats. So by declawing their cats, these people are being put at a higher risk.

22 countries, including England, France, and Germany, and many other states and cities have already banned declawing, and I would be proud to live in a state on the forefront of this nation's change. Cats are not ours to customize, they are beautiful creatures that we are lucky enough to live beside. In the words of Gandhi: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

This is why I support house bill 445.

Sophia Rasin Rubin, district 41