

HB 445 - Animal Welfare - Declawing Cats - Prohibited Acts
SUPPORT TESTIMONY

February 13, 2020

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I am writing to express my full support of Maryland House Bill 445-Animal Welfare-Declawing Cats-Prohibited Acts. Declawing cats is inhumane, unnecessary, and a currently legal form of animal abuse.

A natural and instinctual cat behavior is scratching. Cat owners often elect to declaw their cats in order to protect their furniture; however, in order to fully convey the nature of the procedure and consequences of declawing, it is pertinent to equate this procedure to what it would mean for a human. Declawing a cat is the equivalent of removing a human's finger at the last knuckle, which, to name just one consequence, would cause significant challenges with mobility. Declawing cats by severing the bones and tendons in the front paws does indeed impact mobility, in addition to often causing lifelong pain and behavioral problems including emotional distress, biting, litter box avoidance, and arthritis (The Paw Project, 2020).

There are many methods to prevent scratching that do not include physically altering a cat's anatomy, including regular nail trimmings, providing scratching posts and boards throughout the house, soft nail caps, and behavior modification through application of special pet double-sided tape to furniture (Humane Society, 2020). Additionally, some believe the erroneous claim that declawing is necessary to keep immune-compromised humans safe; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) debunks this, and does not recommend declawing cats (2016). The CDC instead recommends the behavior modification techniques mentioned above.

I stand with the multitude of reputable groups that are against declawing including, but not limited to, The Humane Society of the United States, The Humane Society Veterinarian Medical Association, The Paw Project, The American Association of Feline Practitioners, The American Animal Hospital Association, and The Canadian Veterinary Association. In addition to these reputable organizations, many animal rescues in Maryland have a no declaw policy in place for adopters, including the Animal Welfare League of Montgomery County, Last Chance Animal Rescue, BARCs, Montgomery County Animal Shelter, Howard County Animal Shelter, and many, many more. Maryland should follow the important precedent made by many animal rescues throughout the state, and implement this supportive policy.

When making the decision to adopt a cat for its lifetime, it is a promise to provide a safe, healthy life. In addition to animal rescues' no declawing policies and education provided to adopters, having a state-level policy that bans declawing will benefit cats and their owners across Maryland, helping to ensure that safe, healthy, and happy life.

Thank you for your time and consideration in taking further steps to protect the welfare of cats in Maryland.

Respectfully,

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References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). Cat Scratch Disease FAQs. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/bartonella/cat-scratch/index.html> on February 12, 2020.

Humane Society (2020). Declawing cats: Far worse than a manicure. Retrieved from: <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/declawing-cats-far-worse-manicure> on February 13, 2020.

The Paw Project (2020). Frequently Asked Questions About Feline Declawing. Retrieved from: <https://pawproject.org/about-declawing/faqs/> on February 13, 2020.