



Susan V. Whittred, D.V.M.
34 Hamilton Avenue
Oyster Bay, New York 11771
Phone: 516-922-2287
Fax: 516-922-5203
Cell: 917/974-3416

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment & Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Anapolis, MD 21401

Re: In Support of HB445 (Prohibition of Declawing Cats)

Dear Delegate Barve, Delegate Stein,
and Members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Patricia H. Ladew Foundation, Inc., a cat sanctuary located in Oyster Bay, New York and as a New York veterinarian I strongly support HB445 which would prohibit the declawing of cats.

As executive director and veterinarian of the Patricia H. Ladew Foundation, Inc., I can tell you from experience that declawed cats are not guaranteed a home. We currently have a no-declaw clause in our contract because in our experience cats that have been declawed more often than not lose their homes because of inappropriate urination and/or biting. We have several declawed cats that we have rescued and are unable to place because of these behavior changes attributed to being declawed. These cats have lost their claws, their homes and were nearly euthanized at city shelters prior to rescue. We have seen this pattern so often that we would rather lose an adoption than adopt to someone who would declaw. In the cities that have banned declawing the adoption rates have not decreased and the relinquishment rates have not increased when comparing the data from shelters in those cities 5 years before the ban compared to 5 years after. This data can be provided to you.

Cats naturally use their claws to assist in climbing and maintaining balance, to help them stretch and exercise, and to escape danger. Cats are commonly declawed in an attempt to protect furniture from unwanted scratching. Occasionally, animals are declawed in a misinformed attempt to protect human health, despite the CDC's

and NIH's advice to "not declaw" to prevent opportunistic disease in immunocompromised individuals. There are safe and effective means to manage undesirable scratching behaviors through simple training and other established methods. My own immune-compromised mother lived to be 100 years old with clawed cats all of her life.

In my 16 years of practice I can tell you that there was only one instance where a client thought he had to declaw is cat due to a health issue. All the rest (and mostly these were kittens) were to protect furniture and most of those were "in case the cat scratches the furniture." At the shelter, it was not uncommon to learn that the adopter had already decided to declaw the kitten before they even picked out the kitten because declawing was something that "they just always did to their cats."

Declawing, also known as onychectomy, is the amputation of all or most of the last bone of each of the toes of the animal's feet. The American Veterinary Medical Association lists "anesthetic complications (including death), hemorrhage, infection and pain" as potential complications of declawing. Chronic pain syndromes, permanent lameness, and behavior changes have been described in the veterinary scientific literature as complications of declawing.

Declawing is unnecessary and inhumane. It is already banned in my great state of New York, nine US cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco. In many countries, including in the United Kingdom, Austria, Israel, Switzerland, and Sweden, declawing is illegal, or is considered unethical by established professional veterinary organizations. Veterinarians in Canada have recently voted to ban the procedure 7 provinces.

By signing this bill, you will stop the injustices that have been caused by veterinarians to cats for the last 50 years. It is time to stop surgically amending cats and causing life-long pain to suit the needs of humans and their couches. Please sign this bill as written so that cats can live as cats.

Sincerely,

Susan V. Whittred, DVM