

Lily Stark  
105 E. Churchill Street  
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February 13th, 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  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE : IN SUPPORT OF HB 445 (PROHIBITION OF DECLAWING OF CATS)

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

I am writing to you in support of this important bill to prohibit declawing of cats. As I am sure you know or have been made aware, declawing is amputation, whether performed by scalpel, clippers, or laser. I hope this is not viewed as a plea made from a place of pure emotion. While I believe compassion should play a large role in policy-making, evidence-based policy is of the utmost importance. This is a clear case in which the evidence is clear: There is no reason to declaw cats to protect human health. The NIH, CDC, US Public Health Service, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the Canadian Medical Association, all have specifically stated that the declawing is "not advised," even for the animals of persons who are severely immunocompromised, including those with HIV. This opinion is echoed in statements on declawing published by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP).

There are those that make the argument that declawing is for animal welfare. The evidence disproves this as well. Besides therapeutic reasons (i.e., unless surgery was necessary to treat animals' medical conditions), there is never a reason to declaw "for the sake of the animal". Declawing does not keep cats in homes, a fact acknowledged by the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP). The state of New York banned declawing in 2019. Seven of the ten Canadian provinces have prohibited declawing by the decisions of the veterinary medical associations there. Eight cities in California - Los Angeles, San Francisco, West Hollywood, Burbank, Santa Monica, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, and Culver City - plus St. Louis, MO and the City and County of Denver, Colorado have enacted declaw bans. Statistics available from those cities indicate that the relinquishment of cats to shelters in those cities, in the years since the bans were enacted, has not increased - in fact, the number of cats dumped in shelters has DECREASED consistently in the years since the laws went into effect.

In fact, my own personal experience supports these facts. My mother declawed our cats when I was a child due to them scratching up the furniture. I must say here that this was many years ago, she has learned from her mistake, and is now a strong opponent to declawing, but at the time, she was not educated on the subject and did not understand the severity and cruelty involved. After the procedure, the cats' paws were too tender to use the litter box with their regular litter, so for a week, they needed to use a litter box with newspaper. The trauma of the amputation, in addition to the change in their routine caused one of the cats to stop using the litter box altogether and began urinating throughout the house - even after switching back to regular litter. For this reason my parents felt they had to rehome them. Fortunately, this fresh start was enough to break the cycle and updates from their new family were all positive, but this case is a perfect example of declawing not only being a cruel disfigurement to animals, but having precisely the opposite of the intended effect of keeping cats in homes. Declawing specifically led to my cats needing to be rehomed. Only because of luck and diligent searching and advertising for an adoptive family were they able to find one.

New York no longer allows declawing. Let Maryland be next to join most of the rest of the world that has access to education and the ability to make research-based and compassionate choices. Every state in the U.S. should join the community of humane cities, states, provinces, and nations.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lily Stark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "L" and "S".

Lily Stark  
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