

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

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

I write in support of HB 445 to prohibit the declawing of cats. I have volunteered thousands of hours at numerous animal welfare organizations over the past few decades, including at the Montgomery County Animals Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC), Montgomery County Partnership for Animal Well-Being (MCPAW)—of which I am currently Vice Chair, the Montgomery County Humane Society (MCHS), the Montgomery County Community Cat Coalition (MCC3), the Animal Welfare League of Montgomery County (AWLMC), as well as for the Animal Ministry of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

As a member of a “humane” society, we as humans should show compassion and caring for others, including the animals with whom we share our lives. We should try whenever possible to alleviate another's suffering, not willfully add to it. Our feline companions show us affection, love and loyalty, we should return the favor, not inflict pain on them for our convenience.

Declawing a cat amounts to amputation and mutilation. It is a complex, risky surgery which requires a skilled vet. Even then it can be painful and traumatic which is why it has already been banned in a number of states and parts of Europe as a form of cruelty.

Declawing traditionally involves the amputation of the last bone of each toe—which would be like cutting off each of our fingers at the last knuckle. The incidence of bleeding, pain, lameness, and infection are similar between all of main types of procedures (amputating with a scalpel, laser surgery, or tendonectomy). Subsequent pain when scratching in the litterbox, may lead cats to stop using it altogether. Some cats may become biters because they no longer have their claws for defense. Some cats develop arthritis or become lame .have personally encountered all of those behaviors over the years as an animal welfare volunteer and a parent of numerous cats.

Declawing is done primarily for the convenience of humans (only on rare occasions is it performed for medical conditions ie cancerous nailbeds). Many people see declawing as an easy/lazy way to stop unwanted scratching, instead of using numerous resources and techniques to redirect behavior. Scratching is normal cat behavior to remove the dead husks from their claws, mark territory, and stretch their muscles.

Some easy tips to prevent unwanted scratching include:

- Keep your cat's claws trimmed ;
- Provide varied scratching posts and boards around: carpet, sisal, wood, and cardboard, as well as different styles and use toys and catnip to entice your cat to use the posts and boards.
- Ask your veterinarian about soft plastic caps (like Soft Paws®) that are glued to the cat's nails.
- Attach a special tape (like Sticky Paws®) to furniture to deter your cat from unwanted scratching.

Educational resources about the negative effects of declawing as well as resources to prevent unwanted scratching should be readily available at Vet's offices, at county shelters and at rescues throughout the state, as well as online.

Again, and particularly on this Valentines Day, I want to emphasize my support for HB 445 to prohibit the declawing of cats. We should celebrate kindness and love and not the abuse and cruel mutilation of these graceful, elegant, agile, loving creatures with whom we share our lives.

Respectfully,

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cc: Del. Vaughn Stewart, HB 445 Co-Sponsor; Del. Bonnie Cullison; Del. Charlotte Crutchfield