

2/16/2020

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 CATS)

Dear Delegate Barve, Delegate Stein, and Member of the Committee:

I would like to express my support of the bill HB 445: Prohibition of Declawing Cats. In my capacity as a volunteer at the Caroline County Humane Society on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, I have seen many cats come through our doors. Some of these cats that are surrendered to us are declawed. Although some of our declawed cats are surrendered to us for reasons other than behavior and some of the declawed cats we intake do not have behavior issues – many of them are surrendered with behavioral problems.

One of the major problems with declawed cats is not using the litter box. This is also the number one reason for a cat being surrendered to the shelter. No one wants a cat who does not use the litter box, yet declawing creates cats who struggle with this. Studies show that the reason for this is the pain that declawed cats can experience with the change in their gait when walking, or sometimes from a poorly done declaw surgery.

The other behavior problem that is common among cats who are declawed is aggression. Declawed cats are often timid, fearful, and even aggressive. Declawed cats are more likely to become biters. A cat's claws are a natural defense for them. Without claws, the cats are left vulnerable and often in pain, making them defensive – therefore, aggressive.

Our shelter takes in 1100 cats a year. We are able to adopt out about 200. We do our best to get as many of the rest to rescue groups in urban areas, but cat overpopulation is everywhere in Maryland, so not all cats will be able to go to rescue. Cats who have litter box issues are the last to be chosen for adoption or rescue – which usually means they are not chosen at all. Cats who exhibit aggression will be unlikely to be adopted or chosen for rescue and are likely to be euthanized. There are euthanasias that we're not able to prevent at our shelter and each one is heartbreaking. This elective procedure is one we can stop, and it will save lives.

Because of the well documented pain declawing causes, as well as the well-known behavior issues resulting from it, we ask 100% of our adopters to commit to not declaw their cats that they adopt from us. If an adopter cannot commit to this policy, they are not allowed to adopt from us. Our lawmakers have the power to take this a step further and stop the pain and suffering we see come through our doors from this barbaric act. We ask that our law makers to stop the preventable pain and resulting behavior issues that come out of declawing cats.

We respectfully request that you vote in favor of prohibiting declawing cats on February 19th under HB 445.
Thank you,

Respectfully,

Jennifer Hodge

Jennifer Hodge

Member of the Board of the Directors for Caroline County Humane Society

jen.hodge@carolinehumane.org