



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB0445 - ANIMAL WELFARE - DECLAWING CATS - PROHIBITED ACTS

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN
FEBRUARY 19, 2020

HB 445 bans people from declawing, performing a tendonectomy, or other specified procedures that impede on the ordinary functions of a cat's toes. This ensures that no cats will have to deal with the painful consequences of declawing unless it is for a therapeutic purpose to benefit the cat.

Many veterinarians either rarely perform declawing procedures or refuse to do so. This is because cat declawing is a major surgery that amputates the bone on a cat's toes. It has been reported that cats experience long-term physical and behavioral complications as a result of this amputation.¹ Even though the procedure is rare, it can still be done and this bill ensures it's not done.

People often get their cats declawed due to unwanted scratching and believe the operation is harmless. Declawing can result in permanent damage and is incredibly painful for cats. Cats experience both physical and mental pain. The physical complications include lameness in the legs, arthritis, chronic pain, and/or aversion in using the litter box because the litter hurts their tender paws. The mental complications can impact their behavior; including litter box avoidance due to the pain, biting, or increased aggression.² This procedure creates great discomfort to the cat, as it reduces their mobility and leaves them defenseless.

There are alternatives to declawing to prevent unwanted scratching. This includes getting a scratch post, trimming the claws, or applying temporary synthetic nails caps. These are safe and effective alternatives to declawing. These alternatives are less painful and do not lead to physical or mental complications.

¹ "Declaw... or Not?" *American Veterinary Medical Association*, www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/declaw-or-not.

² Martell-Moran, Nicole K, et al. "Pain and Adverse Behavior in Declawed Cats." *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Apr. 2018, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28534655.

At present - New York State and the cities; West Hollywood, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Culver City, Santa Monica, and Denver all have declawing bans. Maryland does not have any restrictions or regulations on declawing or tendonectomy.

I ask that you vote in favor of HB0445.