

TO: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair

#### IN SUPPORT OF SB67 - Maryland Cat Protection Legislation

This bill will protect countless cats from an unnecessary and nontherapeutic surgery that has become recognized as below the industry standard of care. Declawing, more appropriately called de-knuckling, is the full or partial amputation of the last bones in cats' toes. It performed on 20-25% of American cats. Let me tell you why this should end.

Please know that I would never tell you I was an expert in anything, except declawing. I am a veterinarian who has spent over 20 years studying the effects of declawing cats. Here are my conclusions: Declawing bans are good for everyone.

1. Declawing bans are good for cats. By not declawing them, cats won't face a lifetime of pain from the 10 or more unnecessary amputations. They won't be forced to change the way they walk. Their paws will remain healthy and whole. I assure you declawing is not rare. The literature says about one in four American cats is declawed.
2. Declawing bans are good for the owners; they preserve the human-animal bond. The owners won't have to deal with their beloved cats enduring chronic, lifetime pain, and biting more and using the litter box less. These are well-known adverse sequelae that occur due to the declawing. The cat comes home from the surgery, and it hurts their amputated toe nubs to dig in the sand, so they stop using the box altogether. They have been robbed of their primary way of defending themselves, their claws, so they must resort to biting for self-protection. Their chronic pain makes them more likely to bite. How can that be good for anyone especially immunocompromised owners? Also, you are protecting owners from falling for paying extra for an unnecessary surgery that vets try to rationalize by saying they can make it practically painless by using LASER. Not so. The literature does not support this. Only LASER companies tout this, but it doesn't stand up to scientific examination. LASER can cause 4<sup>th</sup> degree burning of the bone.
3. Declawing bans are good for veterinarians. By not declawing, vets won't have to break the oath, "Above all, do no harm." The industry recognizes that this surgery doesn't belong in practice. Declawing is no longer performed in the nation's largest veterinary chains, amounting to 1000s and 1000s of hospitals and they report that their veterinarians, staff, clients, and patients are happier. By banning declawing, you are elevating those who are operating below the industry standard of care to operate, at least, at the industry standard of care.

4. Declawing bans are good for the community. Declawed cats often lose their homes at a high rate because of the behavior problems that arise due to declawing. Many shelters have to use taxpayer dollars to “euthanize” the discarded, declawed cats. In the cases where a rescue group takes in the cats, they are then burdened with using their precious resources to try to help these poor animals. By banning declawing, the evidence shows that fewer cats will be dumped in the shelters. Please don’t believe that veterinarians only declaw to keep cats out of the pound. Surveys show that most declaws are performed in a misguided effort to protect furnishings. Why misguided? Because declawed cats use the litter box less and often seek carpets and couches to use for their bathrooms because they no longer want to dig in the sand. Declaw bans are also good for the community because declawed cats are more likely to bite and bite wounds are bad for humans. If you call the Emergency Room and say that you have been **scratched** by a cat, they will say wash it and watch it. If you call the Emergency Room and say that you have been **bitten** by the cat, they will tell you to come in. According to the Mayo Clinic, one third of cat bite patients must be hospitalized for IV antibiotics. Declawed cats bite more than their clawed counterparts, way more. It’s in the literature. This is a public health concern.

5. A declawing ban is good for Maryland. In all other jurisdictions where bans have passed, we have found that cats are keeping their homes and that’s good for everyone.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,  
I respectfully ask for your yes vote.

  
Jennifer Conrad, DVM