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To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Proposal to ban cat declawing in Maryland – OPPOSE

This letter is to respectfully request that the proposal to ban cat declawing in Maryland be declined. My request is based on the following:

My late husband developed Mild Cognitive Impairment that rapidly progressed to Alzheimer's Disease. Our beloved cat, Jonas, was his constant companion serving as his service and support animal. Jonas could comfort and calm him when nothing else would. Jonas was devoted to him and would follow him from room to room and sit with him for hours.

Jonas was not declawed and as my husband's disease progressed, he could not mentally process or prevent Jonas' claws from pricking him as Jonas sat in his lap. It was agonizing to see my husband's dismay and confusion when this happened. I recognized that the only viable solution was to have Jonas declawed.

I discussed this with Jonas' vet, Dr. Amspaugh of Quince Orchard Veterinary Hospital. He knew my husband as he had always attended our pets' appointments until his disease progressed to the point of not being able to do so. He agreed and Dr. Giebel, head of the practice, compassionately and promptly declawed Jonas using laser which minimized any discomfort to Jonas.

I cannot fully express the joy I experienced when Jonas could sit for hours with my husband again without causing him confusion because of the claws hurting him! Jonas remained his service and support animal until my husband's death a full year after Jonas was declawed.

This is not my family's only experience.

Currently my sister is battling Stage IV metastatic cancer. Her kitten, Lancelot, is her service and support animal. My sister's treatment has resulted in her being wheelchair bound and suffering from lymphedema. She cannot risk having Lancelot's claws scratch her and result in an infection. This could be deadly for her! Lancelot is a comfort and support to her just as Jonas was to my late husband. Having him declawed is the only option for him to remain with her.

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I know that Dr. Giebel will do so with the same compassion he demonstrated with Jonas.

I recognize that these anecdotes are my family's experiences. I am confident, however, that other families across Maryland experience similar issues.

**Please do not remove the discretionary ability for Maryland veterinarians to exercise their clinical judgement in performing cat declawing! To do so will result in a profound loss of service and support for Marylanders with compromising circumstances.**

Thank you for your review of this information.

Sincerely,

*Jeanne Sanders*

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