

January 17, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
House Office Bldg. Room 251  
6 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegates Barve, Stein, and Members:

On behalf of Alley Cat Allies and our more than 34,000 supporters in Maryland, I am writing to urge you to support **HB 22, “Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts.”** If enacted into law, this bill would prohibit the declawing of cats, a cruel and painful procedure which involves severing a cat's toes at the knuckle.

Alley Cat Allies is the leading advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and improving the lives of all cats. We have promoted sound and compassionate policies for cats since our founding in 1990, and we regularly work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public to change attitudes and advance lifesaving laws and policies that best serve the interests of cats.

A lack of understanding about declawing, also known as onychectomy, has caused it to become a routine part of American veterinary medicine. It is estimated that around 25 percent of cats in the United States are declawed, largely to prevent scratching.<sup>1</sup> However, due to wide-spread education and awareness, Americans increasingly realize how detrimental declawing can be to a cat's wellbeing.

Many opponents to declawing bans claim that owners, frustrated by scratching, could relinquish their cats to shelters if this procedure is no longer allowed.<sup>2</sup> However, declawing itself can cause behaviors so disruptive that cats end up being relinquished to a shelter. A declawed cat is more likely to exhibit increased aggression and biting to compensate for losing his protective claws, his first line of defense. Declawing also leads to chronic pain, arthritis, balance issues, and back problems. The residual pain associated with declawing also can result in litter box avoidance.

We invite animals into our homes as companions and family members. Having cats means caring for them, providing for them, and using humane solutions to solve behavioral issues. Claws are an extremely important part of a cat's anatomy. We do not remove a puppy's teeth to prevent him from chewing on shoes. Instead, we provide the puppy with appropriate toys that allow him to carry out his instincts. Similarly, we should not surgically remove a cat's toes and permanently alter his health and wellbeing when humane alternatives to scratching are available and affordable.<sup>3</sup>

Declaw bans are gaining momentum. New York state, 13 major cities including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver and St. Louis, and at least 42 countries, including Switzerland, Israel, and England, have outlawed declawing cats. Maryland would be at the forefront of this movement to ensure that cats will no longer be forced to undergo this inhumane and painful procedure. **We urge you to support HB 22 and keep cats' claws on their paws.**

Sincerely,



Becky Robinson  
*President & Founder, Alley Cat Allies*

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<sup>1</sup> The Paw Project, *Frequently Asked Questions About Feline Declawing*, <http://www.pawproject.org/faqs/> (last visited Oct. 30, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Christine Hauser, *Cat Declawing Ban in Denver Would Be a First Outside California*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 25, 2017), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/25/us/denver-cats-claws.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Rubbing or spraying scratching posts with catnip, trimming their claws, nail caps (vinyl nail covers that can be applied by a veterinarian, groomer, or at home), or spraying the cat's target scratching area with a homemade or commercial deterrent.