



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HOUSE BILL 22 — ANIMAL WELFARE - DECLAWING CATS - PROHIBITED ACTS

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

JANUARY 19, 2022

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

HB22 provides that a person shall not perform declawing, tendonectomy, or specified procedures that prevent the normal functioning of an animal's toes. This prohibition does not apply to a procedure performed by a veterinarian solely for a therapeutic purpose to benefit the animal.

Cat declawing is the amputation of the last bone of a cat's toes. The surgery may be performed using guillotine clippers, scalpel blades, bone shears, or surgical lasers. Regardless of the techniques used, long-term physical and behavioral complications are reported. Another declawing procedure called tendonectomy involves severing the tendons cats use to extend their claws. The American Veterinary Medical Association acknowledges that declawing and tendonectomy are not medically necessary and further states that tendonectomy "is not recommended." Declawing is an elective procedure that requires an amputation, which can result in long-term physical complications, such as lameness, arthritis, and chronic pain.

Furthermore, The Center for Disease Control states that the declawing of pets is "not advised" to protect immunocompromised people against infection. Declawed cats are more likely to bite and cat bites are exponentially more harmful to people than scratches, causing hospitalizations.¹

At present - New York State and the cities; West Hollywood, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Culver City, Santa Monica, Denver, Austin, St. Louis, Madison, Pittsburgh all have declawing bans. To restrict or regulate declawing and tendonectomy does not currently exist in Maryland.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB22.

¹[Cat Bite Infections of the Hand: Assessment of Morbidity and Predictors of Severe Infection - Journal of Hand Surgery](#)