

HB0022 – Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts

SUPPORT TESTIMONY

January 19, 2022

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee.

My name is Carol Oliver, I volunteer for The Feline Rescue Association, and we are in support of House Bill 0022. Our mission is to bring better lives to stray, abandoned and feral cats through rescue, adoption and spay/neuter and education.

While I can tell you many sad stories of declawed cats and kittens the most personal and moving experiences I have had was with my own cat Shadow. When Shadow was about 8 or 9 her owners decided to declaw her and then surrendered her to a shelter because her new litter box habits and change of behavior were unacceptable to them. Declawed cats are more likely to bite.

When I first met Shadow she was hiding under a blanket in her cage at the shelter, fearful of the unfamiliar surroundings but it was obvious she craved human attention. Sweet and loving.

Knowing that her chances of adoption were slim I decided to make her part of my family. When I got her home, I realized how mangled her paws were, how tender and painful. After a few years she finally stopped flinching when her paws were inadvertently touched. It probably took 4 years to heal but the consequences of being mutilated lasted a lifetime. She never used a litter box, the arthritis was severe enough that she walked with the posture of a raccoon. She loved to cuddle with the other kitties but did not participate in playtime. Instinctive to cats is to scratch on a surface to shed that outer layer of nail and declawed cats still have that instinct, but it is painful, and I witnessed her discomfort many times over the years. I was lucky to have had this sweet kitty for 10 years before she crossed that rainbow bridge, and she was lucky she found a loving home where her disabilities were understood. Unfortunately, there is no happy ending for so many declawed cats.

**Over 20 countries have banned declawing and more cities and counties in the USA are banning it every year. In recent years Maryland has shown great compassion in protecting dogs and we ask that Maryland strike another blow against animal cruelty by passing this declawing bill. Rescues, shelters and cats will greatly appreciate it.
We urge a favorable report on HB 22.**

Thank you for your time and your consideration,

**Carol Oliver, Volunteer
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