

# **Declaw testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amish Shah

Position: FAV

Hello, my name is Amish Shah, MD, and I am an emergency physician, as well as a member of the Arizona House of Representatives. I attended Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, and I was a faculty member at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine for several years in Manhattan, teaching residents and medical students.

I am testifying in support of HB22.

I became interested in this issue after reading about the declaw ban in New York State as well as several other jurisdictions across the country. The practice is widely condemned as cruelty and mutilation, and it is illegal and most developed countries around the world.

Anatomically, the human fingernail arises from a bed just below the skin surface. In a cat, the claw arises from the bone known as the distal phalanx. In order to declaw a cat, one has to amputate the last portion of the finger, including the tendons and soft tissue. This procedure is akin to having the ends of all your fingers amputated, all for the sake of furniture. As in humans, amputation often leads to chronic pain and debilitation for the animal for the rest of its life.

Veterinarians and several of their organizations such as the American Association of Feline Practitioners have presented robust scientific evidence of the harm of this procedure and shunned its use. Large veterinary chains have banned it altogether.

Opponents of this bill have asserted that declaw procedures might have a benefit to human health. As a practicing Emergency Physician of 15 years, I am here to emphatically and categorically assert that ALL of these claims are false. In all of my years of practice, I have NEVER seen a person seriously harmed by cat scratches from claws. I have NEVER seen a hemophiliac require blood due to scratches. I have NEVER seen someone who is immunocompromised suffer from a serious infection.

The scientific literature bears this out, showing that cats who are declawed are much more likely to bite. As a practicing ER doctor, my colleagues and I will attest that cat bite wounds are much more likely to produce an infection and serious harm.

This movement to ban declawing was started by veterinarians in keeping with the oath they took to protect their patients. With a ban in place, veterinarians who are acting in good conscience would level the playing field and not lose out to those who are willing to reject science. I humbly ask for your support on HB22.

# **HSVMA Support Letter for MD Declaw Bill\_01\_2022\_Ho**

Uploaded by: Barbara Hodges

Position: FAV



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
VETERINARY MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION.**

17 January 2022

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Michael Blackwell, DVM, MPH  
Knoxville, TN

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
East Greenwich, RI

Barry Kellogg, VMD  
North Port, FL

Barry Kipperman, DVM,  
DACVIM, MSc  
San Ramon, CA

Paula Kislak, DVM  
Santa Barbara, CA

Nicole Paquette, JD  
Washington, DC

Gwendy Reyes-Illg, DVM  
Milwaukie, OR

Meredith Rives, DVM  
Evanston, IL

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Holly Cheever, DVM  
Voorheesville, NY

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS,  
DACVB, DACVAA  
Grafton, MA

Anne Fawcett, BVSc,  
MVetStud GradCertEd,  
MANZCVS, DipECAWBW  
NSW, Australia

Brenda Forsythe, MD, PhD,  
DVM, CAAB  
Guadalupe, CA

Zarah Hedge, DVM, MPH,  
DACVPM, DABVP  
San Deigo, CA

Joann Lindenmayer, DVM, MPH  
North Grafton, MA

Sheila (D'Arpino) Segurson,  
DVM, DACVB  
Pleasanton, CA

Erin Spencer, M.Ed.,  
CVT, VTS (ECC)  
Derry, NH

Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice-Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Maryland Legislature  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: VETERINARY SUPPORT for HB 22/SB 67, prohibiting declawing of cats in Maryland**

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) to convey our strong support for HB 22/SB 67, legislation that would end the practice of declawing cats in Maryland unless medically necessary to treat a physical illness, injury or disease. HSVMA is a national association of approximately 9,000 veterinary professionals—including more than 230 Maryland members—focused on the health and welfare of all animals, including companion cats.

Declawing is a painful, invasive surgery—a series of 10-18 separate amputations of the last bones of a cat's toes. Contrary to widely-held belief, declawing is not simply removal of nails. It is typically performed for convenience and to avoid possible damage to household items. However, declawing exposes the patient to risks of anesthesia, infection and blood loss as well as chronic pain, nerve damage and lameness.

Research has repeatedly indicated not only a high post-operative complication rate of 50%, but also an increased likelihood of declawed cats biting and avoiding the litter box. Tragically, these are the primary behavioral reasons why cats are relinquished to shelters, where many face euthanasia. A prominent 2017 study in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* found that 63% of declawed cats had painful bone fragments remaining after surgery. This led to further exacerbation of permanent side effects, including back pain and litter box avoidance.

Scratching is a normal feline behavior. It removes dead husks from cats' claws, marks territory, and stretches muscles. Where scratching may be a problem, HSVMA advocates the use of humane alternatives. These are better not only for the cats' health, but also for cat owners who are often not informed about the common, expensive, frustrating and potentially dangerous consequences of this misguided



procedure. Sensible alternatives include well-selected scratching posts, alternative furniture selection or placement, nail trims, training, and nail caps.

HSVMA joins the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) in being strongly opposed to convenience declawing. Declawing has already been prohibited in dozens of countries worldwide, as well as 13 U.S. cities—Madison, WI; Austin, TX; Denver, CO; St. Louis, MO; Pittsburgh, PA and Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Monica, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Culver City and West Hollywood, CA. In 2019 the first bill to prohibit convenience declawing statewide was signed into law in New York. If HB 22/SB 67 is enacted, Maryland will become the second state in the nation to prohibit this inhumane surgical procedure.

We strongly urge you and your colleagues in the Maryland legislature to demonstrate your humane leadership by supporting passage of HB 22/SB 67.

Respectfully,

Nikhil Joshi, VMD

Carrie Waters, DVM, PhD, JD, DACVIM

HSVMA Maryland State Representatives

# **Alley Cat Allies re MD HB 22 Declawing prohibition**

Uploaded by: Becky Robinson

Position: FAV

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*

---

<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.

# **HB22 FAV Carol Oliver.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carol oliver

Position: FAV



## **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  
The Feline Rescue Association  
Oliverkiki1@gmail.com**

# **Maryland Declaw Ban Factsheet 2022.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danielle Bays

Position: FAV

# Support HB22/SB67: Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts



PHOTO BY: ISTOCK

**Declawing is no trip to the spa. It involves amputating the last part of a cat's 10 front toes and sometimes the last part of the 8 back toes as well. A comparison in humans would be cutting off a person's fingers at the last joint.**

- Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Scratching removes the dead husks from cats' claws, marks territory visually and with scent glands in their paws and stretches their muscles. Unfortunately, what is natural behavior for a cat often is considered misbehavior by a cat's human guardian, especially when furniture or other household objects are damaged in the process.
- One in five cats has long-term complications from declaw surgery and 50% have immediate post-surgical complications. One in three cats demonstrate at least one behavioral problem after declawing, as reported by their owners.
- Mars Veterinary Health, the largest veterinary hospital system in the U.S., which runs 2000+ VCA, Banfield, and Blue Pearl clinics and employs 10% of all practicing veterinarians in the U.S., stopped offering declaw surgery in February 2020. "Every medical procedure supported by our veterinary practices has been put in place with the health and well-being of pets in mind and, based on this, we do not support the elective declawing of any animal in our veterinary practices."

## Declawing is not performed in most countries of the world

- Nontherapeutic declawing of cats is prohibited or considered unethical practice in most countries, including Sweden, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and much of the European Union. The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals prohibits the procedure.
- New York became the first U.S. state to ban nontherapeutic declawing in 2019. With broad bipartisan support, the bill passed the Assembly by a 115-31 vote and passed the Senate by a 50-12 vote. Fifty-five New York animal rescue organizations/shelters and 143 New York veterinarians endorsed the bill.
- Declawing is banned in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Monica, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Culver City, and West Hollywood, CA, Denver, CO, Austin, TX, St. Louis (city and county), MO, Pittsburgh, PA and Madison, WI.
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association declared itself opposed to nontherapeutic declawing in 2017 which is banned by eight out of ten provincial veterinary associations: Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.
- California and Rhode Island also prohibit landlords from requiring a tenant's cat be declawed as a condition of occupancy.

## Declawing is bad for cats and bad for people.

- According to research published in the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery in 2018 declaw surgery in cats was associated with a significant increase in the odds of developing adverse behaviors, including biting, barbering, aggression and inappropriate elimination, as well as signs of back pain. These are common reasons for the relinquishment of cats to shelters.
- The documented increased biting behavior of declawed cats can lead to more severe disease in people than cat scratches. Cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk to healthy and immunocompromised people alike. According to the Mayo Clinic, one in three patients with cat bites needs to be hospitalized, with two-thirds of those hospitalized requiring surgical treatment.
- The American Association of Feline Practitioners in its position statement opposing declawing noted: "While it has been suggested that declawing is acceptable to prevent spread of zoonotic disease(s) to immune-compromised people, current research demonstrates the greater value of proper hygiene and parasite control." The National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Infectious Diseases Society of America jointly stated that declawing is "not advised" to protect the health of even severely immune-compromised patients, including those with HIV.

### It's time to stop declawing

- Declawing is still too commonly practiced and not only as a last resort. According to the AVMA's estimation, vets declaw 24.4% of domestic cats.
- Some veterinarians have opposed government regulation of medical practice decisions. However, declawing is a distinctly injurious and unethical "convenience" procedure that lacks medical purpose. Many U.S. veterinarians continue to declaw despite professional recommendations against it, and clients are often not made aware of its high risk of permanent adverse effects or its controversies.
- Many viable alternatives to declawing exist (such as behavior training, nail caps, double-sided tape applied to furniture), as do numerous options in furniture selection, placement and protection which do not physically or behaviorally harm the cat.

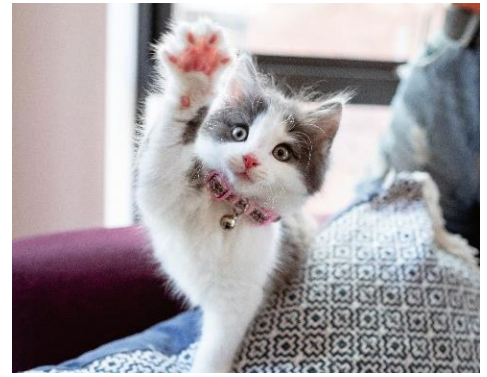


PHOTO BY: ISTOCK

### Declawing doesn't guarantee a cat will remain in the home.

- A declaw ban does not lead to an increase in cats surrendered to animal shelters or an increase in euthanasia, as shown by a review of data from three years prior and three years after a provincial declaw ban in British Columbia.
- The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association assert the likelihood that a cat may be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished should not be the basis of a decision to declaw and that declawing "is not considered to be a justifiable alternative to relinquishment."
- Publicly available intake data for shelters in the cities where declaw bans were enacted shows all shelter systems experiencing lower cat intakes following enactment of the legislation. For example, the Los Angeles municipal shelter documented a 43% reduction in the number of owner-surrendered cats in the five years after the declaw ban was enacted compared to the five years before.

For more information:

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, HSUS Maryland State Director, at [jbevandangel@humanesociety.org](mailto:jbevandangel@humanesociety.org)

Danielle Bays, HSUS Cat Protection & Policy, at [dbays@humanesociety.org](mailto:dbays@humanesociety.org)

Dr. Jennifer Conrad, DVM and Dr. Jim Jenvold, The Paw Project at [info@pawproject.org](mailto:info@pawproject.org)

# **Maryland HB 22 Declaw Ban testimony 011922.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danielle Bays

Position: FAV



**Testimony in support of HB 22, a bill to prohibit declawing of cats**  
**Maryland House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**January 19, 2022**

The Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal protection organization, supports passage of HB 22, which would end the practice of nontherapeutic declawing of cats in the state. Declawing has serious implications for feline welfare and the bond between people and their cats. If passed, Maryland would join a rapidly growing number of communities taking a stand against this inhumane practice.

Convenience declawing of cats is already illegal in New York State and in eight California cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco. It's banned in the city and county of Denver, Colorado and the city and county of St. Louis, Missouri. Most recently, declaw bans have been passed in Austin, Texas, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Madison, Wisconsin. All by unanimous vote. Eight out of ten Canadian provinces prohibit non-therapeutic declawing.

Nontherapeutic declawing is banned or considered an unethical veterinary practice in a vast number of countries, from New Zealand to Brazil to the United Kingdom. The European Convention on the Protection of Pet Animals prohibits the procedure.

The veterinary community is increasingly opposed to declawing. The American Association of Feline Practitioners, the American Animal Hospital Association, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association are opposed. The major veterinary hospital chains, VCA, Banfield, and Blue Pearl, do not offer elective declaw procedures on cats. Many U.S. veterinary schools no longer routinely teach declaw procedures.

However, we can't continue to wait for the veterinary profession to end declawing on its own. These amputations are still too commonly practiced, and cat owners are often not made aware of the high risk of permanent adverse effects on cats or of the procedures' controversies – that many veterinarians won't amputate a cat's toes unless there is a valid medical need.

Arguments in favor of declawing often center around the desire to prevent unwanted scratching of either furniture or people. Amputation is an extreme response to what can be addressed with regular nail trimming, a variety of scratching posts and a better understanding of feline behavior. Moreover, declawed cats are at a greater risk of developing more serious adverse behaviors after amputation, such as litter box aversion or an increase in biting and aggression, than the ones the amputations were meant to prevent.

In pain, and no longer able to defend themselves with their claws, cats may resort to biting. The documented increased biting behavior of declawed cats can lead to more severe disease in people than cat scratches. Cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk to healthy and immunocompromised people alike. Infectious disease specialists do not recommend declawing. The National Institutes of



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Infectious Diseases Society of America jointly stated that declawing is “not advised” to protect the health of even severely immune-compromised patients.

Declawing is no good for cats or people.

On behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, the HSUS asks for your support of HB 22, a humane bill which will protect the health and well-being of family pets.

Danielle Bays  
Senior Analyst, Cat Protection & Policy  
The Humane Society of the United States



## **HB22\_FAV\_Dodman.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dr. Nicholas Dodman, BVMA, DACVB, DACVAA

Position: FAV

**Testimony of Dr. Nicholas Dodman**

**January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Environment and Transportation**

**HB22 - Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts**

**FAVORABLE**

Onychectomy

Declawing (onychectomy) is a horrendously painful and disfiguring surgery. It is positively inhumane and conducted solely for the benefit of the owner. It has no benefits for the cat, in fact, quite the opposite.

According to dictionary definitions, amputation of parts of digits is a “mutilation.” Merriam-Webster defines mutilation as “an act or instance of destroying, removing, or severely damaging a limb or other body part of a person or animal.” That’s properly describes declawing.

In one published study, fifty percent of cats were given postoperative opioids to control pain following surgery; the remainder would have benefited from pain relief. Pain relief in the post-operative period or for a day or so after surgery, as more humane veterinarians might prescribe, is inadequate. Many cats that are been declawed become withdrawn and inactive for 3 days after the surgery and over half do not recover from the trauma for much longer than that. Ten percent of cats require more than 2 weeks to “recover” and for some recovery is never complete. Operations have been developed to correct the deformities and chronic pain resulting from surgery.

The argument that declawing saves cats from surrender and euthanasia is false. In fact, house soiling, which is often triggered by declawing, as the cat has its litter replaced with shredded newspaper, is much more likely to get a cat surrendered. The argument that older cat owners with brittle skin and immunocompromised individuals are safer if their cat is declawed has been debunked by medical authorities, like the CDC, because declawed cats bite, which is far more dangerous, instead of scratching.

I urge a favorable report on HB22.

# **Myth\_Fact\_Declawing\_MD.pdf**

Uploaded by: James Jensvold

Position: FAV



## In Support of HB 22 Declawing Myth vs. Fact

### **Myth #1:**

*Implementation of this legislation would take away a veterinarian's ability to counsel a client on the onychectomy (declawing) procedure and provide it as a treatment option where he or she deems it to be the suitable medical decision.*

**Fact:** The language of HB22 makes a clear exemption for cases of therapeutic onychectomy, where the surgery is needed for the physical benefit of the animal – such as nail bed tumors or bone infection. Declawing in other instances is not a “medical decision.” In other instances, it is either a convenience procedure and/or an action taken despite current animal welfare or public health recommendations that advise against its use.

### **Myth #2:**

*Veterinarians maintain an obligation to provide pet owners a complete education with regard to normal scratching behavior of cats and all available alternatives before performing the procedure. The declawing of domestic cats should be considered only after attempts have been made to prevent a cat from using its claws destructively.*

**Fact:** This alleged commitment to provide education and all alternatives to owners before declawing their cats refers to a suggestion/guideline only. It is not an enforced policy within the veterinary profession nor a demonstrably accepted norm. There is no mechanism by any regulatory entity to ensure any veterinarians are accurately and responsibly conveying facts to their clients about this frequently misrepresented and high-risk series of amputations. Declawing being used “only as a last resort” is in fact, unsupported by statistics: as published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, veterinarians have declawed approximately 25% of cats in U.S. homes (at least 20 million cats nationwide). In 2015, "America's Vet", Dr. Marty Becker, came to this conclusion on elective declawing: "Let's put this one into the history books where it belongs!"

### **Myth #3:**

*Clawing and scratching can be highly dangerous and detrimental to families with immunocompromised members or family members with other health issues.*

**Fact:** The National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Public Health Service and the Infectious Diseases Society of America have published a joint statement that clearly states “declawing is not advised” to prevent disease spread to healthy or immune-compromised individuals, including those with HIV.

Veterinary journal articles, including a recently published article by Dr. Nicole Martell-Moran in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, find that declawed cats are more likely to bite, which paradoxically places

medically compromised people at greater risk. The CDC and NIH recommend washing cat scratches with soap and water. Cat bites, on the contrary, pose dramatically greater infection and bleeding risk to both healthy and health-compromised individuals. According to The Mayo Clinic, one out of three cat bites result in hospitalization, and over 65% of those hospitalized require hand surgery.

**Myth #4:**

*Declawing should remain a viable alternative to shelter surrender and euthanasia if all other options have failed.*

**Fact:** Reports in peer-reviewed veterinary research journals indicate that declawing is associated with increased litter box avoidance and increased force and/or frequency of biting. These, not furniture scratching, are the top two behavioral reasons why cats are surrendered to U.S. shelters. The majority of cats surrendered to shelters are euthanized.

Declawing is illegal or considered unethical by veterinarians in most of the world. Declaw prohibition legislation has been enacted in several U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, West Hollywood, Berkeley, Culver City, Beverly Hills, and Burbank. In recent years, declawing has also been banned in Denver, Austin, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Madison. It is also prohibited in the state of New York and in eight of the ten Canadian provinces. In every city with available data, each had a documented reduction in cat intakes to their shelter systems after enacting the legislation. These reductions have remained consistently lower to the present. The Los Angeles shelter system reports a 43.4% reduction in the number of owner-surrendered cats after the declaw ban was enacted. A 2021 study from British Columbia, where declawing was banned in 2018, showed no increase in relinquishment of cats to animal shelters and, specifically, no increase in relinquishment of cats for destructive scratching.

In 2017, the American Association of Feline Practitioners stated that, “There is no current peer-reviewed data definitively proving that cats with destructive behavior are more likely to be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished. The decision (by veterinarians) of whether or not to declaw should not be impacted by these considerations.”

**Myth #5:**

*The surgical performance of an onychectomy by a trained veterinarian is done with proper anesthesia and multimodal pain control, making it indistinguishable from other surgical procedures performed on cats and other animals. In addition, when done with a laser, the procedure is painless.*

**Fact:** Unlike surgeries performed for therapeutic reasons, declawing subjects cats to serious risks while providing no medical benefit whatsoever. Declawing has an extremely high post-surgical complication rate of 50%. In addition, 20% of declawed cats show long-term adverse effects; these high complication rates are not typical among common therapeutic veterinary surgeries. There is no evidence that declawing performed with a laser provides any significant short-term benefit, and since declawing involves at least ten separate amputations of toe bones, the long-term complications of declawing, whether performed by scalpel, clippers, or laser, will occur independently of the technique used.

Declawed cats suffer from behavioral problems. They are less likely to use the litter box due to foot and back pain. Dr. Nicole Martell-Moran’s article in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, found that declawed cats are more likely to bite.

# **Maryland Cat Protection Legislation CONRAD TESTIMO**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Conrad, DVM

Position: FAV

## TESTIMONY OF Dr. Jennifer Conrad

### Maryland Cat Protection Legislation

This bill will protect countless cats from an unnecessary and nontherapeutic surgery that has become recognized as below the 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 is not good for anyone.

1. Declawing is bad for the cat. Declawed cats are likely to face a lifetime of pain. Declawing forces cats to change the way they walk. They will never again be normal.
2. Declawing is bad for the owner. Declawed cats bite more and use the litter box less.
3. Declawing is bad for the veterinarian. It makes them 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 and they report that their veterinarians, staff, clients, and patients are happier.
4. Declawing is bad 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 the cats in, they are then burdened with using their precious resources to try to help these poor animals.
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

**PAW PROJECT SUPPORT MD HB22 2022.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Conrad, DVM

Position: FAV





Advocates for Animals • A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

---

January 15, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates, Environment and Transportation Committee  
Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Dana Stein, Vice Chair

RE: IN SUPPORT OF HB 22 (prohibiting the declawing of cats)

Dear Delegate Barve, Delegate Stein, and Committee Members:

Thank you for introducing HB 22, an important animal protection bill, which will prohibit the inhumane and unnecessary practice of declawing in Maryland. The Paw Project is a national nonprofit, veterinarian-run organization that has worked for 20 years to end declawing. Declawing is, most commonly, a series of amputations of all or most of the last bone of each of an animal's toes performed to prevent unwanted scratching. Declawing removes an integral part of an animal's anatomy and subjects animals to the risks of pain, infection, behavioral changes, and lifelong lameness. Safe and effective alternatives to declawing include simple training and other established deterrent methods. We urge your colleagues to vote YES on this bill.

Declawing is common in the US and Canada, but it is illegal or considered unethical by veterinarians in most countries. The Paw Project partnered with New York Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal to pass the nation's first statewide declaw ban in July 2019. There are active anti-declaw bills in NH, MA, PA, and CA in 2022. In recent years, public opinion regarding declawing has evolved due to educational campaigns and published evidence exposing the harmful effects of declawing. Eight cities in California, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Burbank, Santa Monica, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, and Culver City, have prohibited declawing. Denver, CO, Austin, TX, St. Louis, MO, Pittsburgh, PA and Madison, WI are the other US cities to ban declawing. In the past four years, declawing has been prohibited in eight of ten Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and Fear Free™ forbids their certified practices from performing declaw surgery. The AAFP states, "There is no current peer-reviewed data definitively proving that cats with destructive behavior are more likely to be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished. The decision (by veterinarians) of whether or not to declaw should not be impacted by these considerations." VCA and Banfield Hospitals, which operate many clinics in the state, will not perform "below standard of care" declaw procedures.

Much evidence exists that behavioral changes following declawing can result in the relinquishment of animals to shelters. The CDC and NIH advise pet owners to "not declaw" their animals since declawing is not an effective means of preventing opportunistic disease in immunocompromised individuals.

In 2018, a peer-reviewed scientific article in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* reported that "declawing increases the risk of long-term or persistent pain, manifesting as unwanted behaviors such as inappropriate elimination (soiling/urinating outside of the litter box) and aggression/biting. This is not only detrimental to the cat (pain is a major welfare issue and these behaviors are common reasons for relinquishment of cats to shelters), but also has health implications for their human companions, as cat bites can be serious."

We proudly support this bill, which will greatly protect animals and will end declawing in Maryland.

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer Conrad, DVM, Founder and Director, Paw Project

**HB22\_FAV\_Cassiday.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Cassiday

Position: FAV



**HB 22 - SUPPORT**

Laura Cassiday

Pawsitive Vibes Cat Behavior and Training LLC

[pawsitivevibecat@gmail.com](mailto:pawsitivevibecat@gmail.com) 410-961-3279

## **HB 22 SUPPORT**

### **Animal Welfare - Declawing Cats - Prohibited Acts**

Environment and Transportation Committee

January 19th, 2022

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

My name is Laura Cassiday and I own and operate Pawsitive Vibes Cat Behavior and Training LLC in Baltimore, Maryland. I am strongly in favor of HB 22. I am a certified cat behavior consultant through the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. Simply put, my title means that I am considered an expert in the management, modification and prevention of problem behaviors in cats. It also requires me to keep up to date with the latest research and techniques in feline behavior and training. I am also a certified cat trainer through Animal Behavior College and a Fear Free Certified animal trainer. Over the years, I have worked with cats both in shelter and rescue settings, as well as with private owners. Today, I primarily focus on helping cats and their guardians in private homes, dealing with complex behavior issues from aggression to litter box issues and everything else in between.

As an expert in feline behavior and an active member of the animal welfare community in Maryland, my mission is to improve the lives of cats and their people with the ultimate goal of keeping cats in their homes and out of shelters. There is an overall lack of support and accessible education for cat owners when it comes to behavioral issues both in my area and across the United States, with widespread misinformation on cat behavior being delivered by the internet, word-of-mouth, and occasionally in my experience, even by some veterinarians. Dr. Janet Scarlett of Cornell University said in an article published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, "Less than a third [of veterinarians] felt confident of their ability to treat common behavioral problems." This may be a contributing factor in why some vets still recommend declawing to their patients – they simply aren't as well-versed in feline behavior as they could be.

During my four years working in an animal shelter in Maryland, I saw firsthand cats being surrendered on a daily basis for aggression, litter box issues, and destructive scratching. Unfortunately, many cat owners still operate under the belief that cats are independent, spiteful, and can't be trained. This is simply not true. Most people want their cats declawed in order to prevent these behavior issues from occurring in the first place. They don't want their furniture scratched up. They don't want the cat to scratch their immunocompromised child or elderly grandparent. I'm here to tell you that you absolutely can train your cat not to scratch your furniture using entirely positive, humane methods. And even in my career of working with severely aggressive cats on almost a daily basis and living in a home with eight cats, all of whom have all of their claws, I have only been scratched a handful of times in the last five years. It all comes down to educating the human how to properly interact with the cat and how to read feline body language to know the many warning signs that come before a swat. I have, however,

been bitten twice in the same timeframe, and both times I had to go to the hospital and be placed on antibiotics. In the 1988 article “Effects of declawing on feline behavior,” researchers found that declawed cats were 18.5% more likely than non-declawed cat to bite – which certainly poses more of a risk to your more vulnerable family members. Even if you aren’t interested in training your cat or learning more about his behavior, at a bare minimum these concerns can be managed by regular nail trims or Soft Paws nail caps.

In addition, many people still believe that declawing cats prevents behavior issues from developing and keeps them in their homes and out of shelters. This has not been my experience as a professional feline behavior consultant, and the research backs me up. According to research published in the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery in 2017, declawing increases the risk of long-term or persistent pain in cats. Pain is known to increase the likelihood of unwanted behaviors such as urinating outside of the litter box and aggression, including biting. The research showed that inappropriate toileting, biting, aggression, and overgrooming occurred at least three times more often in the declawed cats than the non-declawed cats. A survey by Forgotten Felines and Friends of Caddo Parish in Louisiana found that 70% of cats surrendered to animal shelters for behavioral problems were declawed.

The reality is that by declawing cats, we are actually creating behavior problems and increasing the number of cats surrendered to shelters. In fact, the first question I ask when meeting a cat with a history of biting or chronic litter box issues is, “Is the cat declawed?” If so, I know that no amount of behavior modification or training will be able to fully resolve the issue until proper pain management has been implemented. And aside from the obvious concerns that declawing poses to the individual cat’s welfare, at the bottom line, keeping declawing legal places an unnecessary, preventable burden on our state’s municipal animal control facilities and costs tax payers money. With the limited resources that these high-volume shelters have to work with behavior problems in cats, cats with histories of aggression or litter box issues have a longer length of stay before becoming available for adoption, if they don’t end up being euthanized. A longer length of stay contributes to overcrowding, which causes cats to become stressed or sick, which in turn increases the length of stay even longer. This means that the government spends more on cat food, medication, litter, cleaning products, and more.

Any way you look at it, declawing harms not only cats, but also people. It contributes to more biting and more people in our state’s Urgent Care facilities and emergency rooms. It contributes to more homes destroyed from house soiling – but at least there are no claw marks in the couch the cat peed on, right? It contributes to more cats in our government-run animal control facilities, wasting taxpayer money. Declawing benefits no one except the veterinarian with a little more money in his bank account. As an expert in feline behavior, an active member of the cat rescue community in Maryland, a taxpayer, and a person with morals, I urge a favorable report on HB 22.

Sincerely,

Laura Cassiday, CCBC, ABBCT, FFCP

# **HB22\_FAV\_MDVFA merged.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FAV



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411  
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

January 19, 2022

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee  
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.  
Re: Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats- Prohibited Acts – HB 22- Support

Chairman Barve, Vice Chairman Stein, members of the Environment & Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the House Environment & Transportation Committee vote favorably for Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats- Prohibited Acts – HB 22.

The most frequent type of declawing is called an onychectomy, which involves using a scalpel or laser to amputate the last bone of a cat's toes on its paws.

Think of surgically amputating a person's fingers or toes at their top joint. Studies have found that declawed cats have a higher percentage of a stress hormone, cortisol, which is often associated with pain. Scans of declawed cat paws often detect leftover bone fragments from the surgery. This can make it painful for these cats as they step on these tiny bone fragments when they walk.

Cats can continue to feel pain after the declawing procedure. Part of a cat's weight is distributed on its toes - so after the declawing process their gait must change to redistribute their weight through their paws. Declawing can affect a cat's balance. Cats rely on their paws, and claws, for behavioral and grooming needs. Their claws help them to protect and defend themselves.

Studies suggest that declawed cats are more likely to have health problems, such as back pain, or behavioral problems, such as aggression. Declawing is a surgical procedure, so cats are at risk for surgical complications such as excessive bleeding, swelling, infections, paw pad lacerations, nerve damage, lameness, and chronic pain. Even using the litter box can be painful on declawed paws.

There are times when this procedure is necessary. This bill does allow veterinarians to do this procedure for medical reasons, such as a severely infected nail bed or tumor.

During the summer of 2021, an HSUS intern for MD selected veterinary hospitals from every county of the state. I have attached the full study but have highlighted a few of the key findings:

- 30 practices responded, representing Counties across Maryland
- 40% of the practices surveyed still perform declaw surgeries for non-medical reasons. There is no geographic correlation to whether a practice offers the surgery or not
- Of those practices that still perform declaw procedures, nearly 70% provide it to protect household items such as furniture or carpets.

From this informal study we have ample evidence that the practice of declawing cats is happening in Maryland, it is happening for non-medically required reasons, and it is happening across the state.

New York outlawed elective declawing in 2019. Fourteen US cities have banned the practice including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Austin, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh. Elective declawing is illegal in most of Europe as well as in Brazil, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand.

Our cats look up to us and count on us to care for and protect them. Declawing is an act of mutilation that should not be done for our benefit. There are far more humane, inexpensive, and effective ways to stop our cats from scratching the furniture.

In closing, I would like to thank Delegate Charkoudian for her sponsorship of HB 22 and ask the committee to give this bill a favorable report.

## De-Knuckling in Maryland: State Survey

During the summer of 2021, an HSUS intern for MD selected veterinary hospitals from every county of the state. The hospitals were randomly generated from an internet search, although hospitals that are part of Mars Veterinary Health, which officially prohibits declaw procedures, were excluded. The hospitals were asked their County of operation; whether they perform declaw; and then the reason they do or do not perform the surgery. Responses were voluntary and confidential. The survey was conducted via Google Forms and respondents were allowed to add their own answers to the questions.

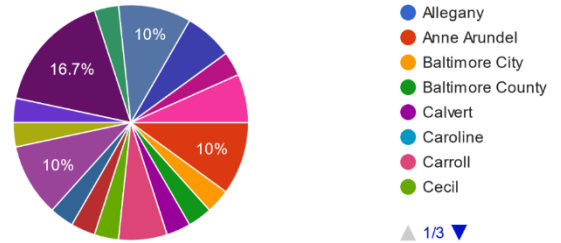
30 practices responded, representing Counties across Maryland. 5 responses were from Prince George's. There were 3 from each of Anne Arundel, Frederick, and St. Mary's. There were 2 from each of Carroll, Somerset, and Worcester. The only Counties that did not have a response were Allegany, Caroline, Garrett, Kent, Montgomery, Talbot, and Washington. All other Counties had one response each.

**40% of the practices surveyed still perform declaw surgeries for non-medical reasons. There is no geographic correlation to whether a practice offers the surgery or not; practices in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Frederick, Prince George's, Somerset, St. Mary's, and Wicomico Counties all stated they no longer perform the surgery.**

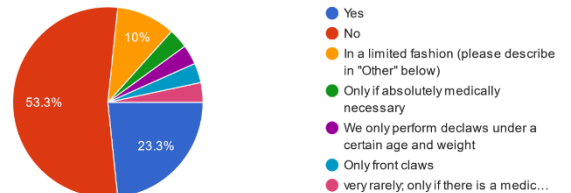
**Of those practices that still perform declaw procedures, nearly 70% provide it to protect household items such as furniture or carpets.**

Of the practices who do not perform declaw procedures, several stated it is "inhumane" or "cruel." One stated the practice is "Scientifically unnecessary and inhumane." **One wrote, "I personally believe that declawing is barbaric and morally repugnant."**

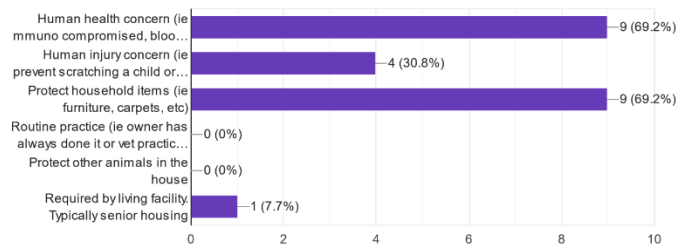
In what county is your practice located?  
30 responses



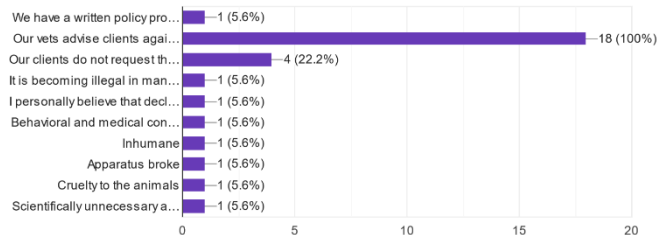
Does your veterinary practice provide declaw operations?  
30 responses



If your practice DOES provide declaw operations, for which of the following reasons do owners request it? (Please select all that apply)  
13 responses



If your practice does NOT perform declaw operations, what is the reason? (Please select all that apply)  
18 responses





## **HB22\_ADD\_INFO\_Charkoudian**

Uploaded by: Lorig Charkoudian

Position: FAV

# HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS IN ANTI-DECLAW LAWS

Declawing cats is not recommended by any known human health expert. The argument that this practice should be preserved to protect owners is not supported by any of the medical literature, which acknowledges the importance of the human-cat bond while focusing on the danger of cat bites, not scratches. This argument is also not born out in any of the countries or localities that have passed declaw bans without this unnecessary and non-medically indicated exemption.

## Medical Literature and Guidance

American Cancer Society – “It’s best if you can avoid bites and scratches while you are getting cancer treatment.... Get your dog or cat’s claws trimmed often so that you’re less likely to be scratched. Scratches should be cleaned and covered until they heal... If your pet bites and breaks the skin, call your doctor. All bites carry the risk of infection and can require hospitalization even in people with normal immune systems. It’s likely you’d need antibiotics and maybe other treatment, depending on the location and severity of the bite. Cat bites are especially likely to become infected, because their long narrow teeth can make deep puncture wounds that are hard to clean.”

<https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/low-blood-counts/infections/safety.html>

ASPCA – “We do not consider the potential for exposure to zoonotic diseases from cat scratches (including in households with immune compromised people) a valid justification for declawing a resident cat. Notably, in providing recommendations for reducing the zoonotic risk associated with pet bites and other exposure to pet saliva, urine and feces, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Public Health Service suggest simple measures such as sanitation, hygiene, careful selection of pets and changes in animal contact. These recommendations do not include declawing.”

<https://www.aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-declawing-cats>

AAFP – “While it has been suggested that onychectomy is acceptable to prevent spread of zoonotic disease(s) to immunocompromised people, current research demonstrates the greater value of proper hygiene and parasite control in the prevention of most common zoonoses. In households where cats come into contact with immune-compromised individuals, extensive education about zoonotic disease potential should be discussed and documented in the medical record. Of note, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not advise declawing cats owned by HIV-infected persons; rather, these individuals ‘should avoid rough play with cats and situations in which scratches are likely.’”

<https://catvets.com/public/PDFs/PositionStatements/2017-DeclawingStatement.pdf>

AAHA – “The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not list declawing as a means of preventing disease in either healthy or immunocompromised individuals.”

<https://www.aaha.org/about-aaha/aaha-position-statements/declawing/>

CDC: “Research has shown that cats can provide emotional support, improve moods, and contribute to the overall morale of their owners. Cats are also credited with promoting socialization among older individuals and physically or mentally disabled people.” While acknowledging the importance of the human-cat bond the CDC has no recommendations to declaw cats; rather, they state “When getting a

new pet, avoid animals that are sick, feral, or young (cats and dogs under 6 months old). These animals are more likely to carry diseases that can make you sick.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/cats.html>;

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/high-risk/organ-transplant-patients.html>

CMA – “Exercise caution when playing with cats to limit scratches; keep cats’ nails short (declawing is not recommended)”

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/187/10/736#sec-16>

Canadian VMA – “It has been suggested that PDA be performed on cats in order to decrease the health risk to immunocompromised humans. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not list PDA as a means of preventing disease in either healthy or immunocompromised individuals”

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/partial-digital-amputation-onychectomy-or-declawing-of-the-domestic-felid-position-statement>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the HIV Medicine Association of the Infectious Diseases Society of America: “Declawing is not advised, but individuals with HIV should avoid rough play with cats and situations in which scratches are likely.”

[https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/sites/default/files/guidelines/documents/Adult\\_OI.pdf](https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/sites/default/files/guidelines/documents/Adult_OI.pdf)

NIH: In an extensive article analyzing the risks of pet ownership, while the agency advises against immuno-compromised individuals from owning very young animals (under the age of 6 months) due to increased behavioral issues and notes the danger of a cat biting an individual, there is no mention of declaw as a suggested or appropriate risk management action.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3096326/>

### Existing Bans

- The state of New York has banned declawing and doesn’t allow exceptions for human health.
- Declawing is prohibited in Los Angeles (CA), San Francisco (CA), West Hollywood (CA), Santa Monica (CA), Berkeley (CA), Beverly Hills (CA), Burbank (CA), Culver City (CA), Denver (CO), St. Louis (MO), Austin (TX), Pittsburgh (PA), St. Louis County (MO), and Madison (WI). None of the local laws allow exceptions for human health.
- Canada – In the provinces of Nova Scotia, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, Newfoundland & Labrador, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, declawing is prohibited and none of the provinces allow exceptions for human health.
- Mars Veterinary Health – The 2000+ VCA, Banfield, and BluePearl clinics operated by Mars Veterinary Health and which employ 10,000+ veterinarians, announced in 2020 that they “must always do the right thing for our patients and...can no longer support declaw procedures in cats...” Mars Veterinary Health does not allow exceptions for human health.
- The World – Declawing is not permitted in much of the world. Many countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Austria, and Sweden, have laws that prohibit declawing. None of these laws allow exceptions for human health.

## **HB22\_ADD\_INFO\_Charkoudian**

Uploaded by: Lorig Charkoudian

Position: FAV

# HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS IN ANTI-DECLAW LAWS

Declawing cats is not recommended by any known human health expert. The argument that this practice should be preserved to protect owners is not supported by any of the medical literature, which acknowledges the importance of the human-cat bond while focusing on the danger of cat bites, not scratches. This argument is also not born out in any of the countries or localities that have passed declaw bans without this unnecessary and non-medically indicated exemption.

## Medical Literature and Guidance

American Cancer Society – “It’s best if you can avoid bites and scratches while you are getting cancer treatment.... Get your dog or cat’s claws trimmed often so that you’re less likely to be scratched. Scratches should be cleaned and covered until they heal... If your pet bites and breaks the skin, call your doctor. All bites carry the risk of infection and can require hospitalization even in people with normal immune systems. It’s likely you’d need antibiotics and maybe other treatment, depending on the location and severity of the bite. Cat bites are especially likely to become infected, because their long narrow teeth can make deep puncture wounds that are hard to clean.”

<https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/low-blood-counts/infections/safety.html>

ASPCA – “We do not consider the potential for exposure to zoonotic diseases from cat scratches (including in households with immune compromised people) a valid justification for declawing a resident cat. Notably, in providing recommendations for reducing the zoonotic risk associated with pet bites and other exposure to pet saliva, urine and feces, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Public Health Service suggest simple measures such as sanitation, hygiene, careful selection of pets and changes in animal contact. These recommendations do not include declawing.”

<https://www.aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-declawing-cats>

AAFP – “While it has been suggested that onychectomy is acceptable to prevent spread of zoonotic disease(s) to immunocompromised people, current research demonstrates the greater value of proper hygiene and parasite control in the prevention of most common zoonoses. In households where cats come into contact with immune-compromised individuals, extensive education about zoonotic disease potential should be discussed and documented in the medical record. Of note, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not advise declawing cats owned by HIV-infected persons; rather, these individuals ‘should avoid rough play with cats and situations in which scratches are likely.’”

<https://catvets.com/public/PDFs/PositionStatements/2017-DeclawingStatement.pdf>

AAHA – “The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not list declawing as a means of preventing disease in either healthy or immunocompromised individuals.”

<https://www.aaha.org/about-aaha/aaha-position-statements/declawing/>

CDC: “Research has shown that cats can provide emotional support, improve moods, and contribute to the overall morale of their owners. Cats are also credited with promoting socialization among older individuals and physically or mentally disabled people.” While acknowledging the importance of the human-cat bond the CDC has no recommendations to declaw cats; rather, they state “When getting a

new pet, avoid animals that are sick, feral, or young (cats and dogs under 6 months old). These animals are more likely to carry diseases that can make you sick.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/cats.html>;

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/high-risk/organ-transplant-patients.html>

CMA – “Exercise caution when playing with cats to limit scratches; keep cats’ nails short (declawing is not recommended)”

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/187/10/736#sec-16>

Canadian VMA – “It has been suggested that PDA be performed on cats in order to decrease the health risk to immunocompromised humans. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not list PDA as a means of preventing disease in either healthy or immunocompromised individuals”

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/partial-digital-amputation-onychectomy-or-declawing-of-the-domestic-felid-position-statement>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the HIV Medicine Association of the Infectious Diseases Society of America: “Declawing is not advised, but individuals with HIV should avoid rough play with cats and situations in which scratches are likely.”

[https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/sites/default/files/guidelines/documents/Adult\\_OI.pdf](https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/sites/default/files/guidelines/documents/Adult_OI.pdf)

NIH: In an extensive article analyzing the risks of pet ownership, while the agency advises against immuno-compromised individuals from owning very young animals (under the age of 6 months) due to increased behavioral issues and notes the danger of a cat biting an individual, there is no mention of declaw as a suggested or appropriate risk management action.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3096326/>

### Existing Bans

- The state of New York has banned declawing and doesn’t allow exceptions for human health.
- Declawing is prohibited in Los Angeles (CA), San Francisco (CA), West Hollywood (CA), Santa Monica (CA), Berkeley (CA), Beverly Hills (CA), Burbank (CA), Culver City (CA), Denver (CO), St. Louis (MO), Austin (TX), Pittsburgh (PA), St. Louis County (MO), and Madison (WI). None of the local laws allow exceptions for human health.
- Canada – In the provinces of Nova Scotia, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Alberta, Newfoundland & Labrador, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, declawing is prohibited and none of the provinces allow exceptions for human health.
- Mars Veterinary Health – The 2000+ VCA, Banfield, and BluePearl clinics operated by Mars Veterinary Health and which employ 10,000+ veterinarians, announced in 2020 that they “must always do the right thing for our patients and...can no longer support declaw procedures in cats...” Mars Veterinary Health does not allow exceptions for human health.
- The World – Declawing is not permitted in much of the world. Many countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Austria, and Sweden, have laws that prohibit declawing. None of these laws allow exceptions for human health.

# **HB22\_Delegate Lorig Charkoudian.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lorig Charkoudian

Position: FAV



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.<sup>1</sup>

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.

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



# Scanned Documents.pdf

Uploaded by: Susan Whittred

Position: FAV



Susan V. Whittred, D.V.M.  
34 Hamilton Avenue  
Oyster Bay, New York 11771  
Phone: 516-922-2287  
Fax: 516-922-5203  
Cell: 917/974-3416

January 12, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates,  
Environment and Transportation Committee

Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Dana Stein, Vice Chair

Via MY MGA

**Re: Veterinary Support of Maryland MD HB22 - to Prohibit the Declawing of Cats**

Dear Delegate Barve, Delegate Stein and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Patricia H. Ladew Foundation, Inc., a cat sanctuary located in Oyster Bay, New York and as a New York veterinarian I strongly support MD HB22 to prohibit the declawing of cats.

As executive director and veterinarian of the Patricia H. Ladew Foundation, Inc., I can tell you from experience that declawed cats are not guaranteed a home. We currently have a no-declaw clause in our contract because in our experience cats that have been declawed more often than not lose their homes because of inappropriate urination and/or biting. We have several declawed cats that we have rescued and are unable to place because of these behavior changes attributed to being declawed. These cats have lost their claws, their homes and were nearly euthanized at city shelters prior to rescue. We have seen this pattern so often that we would rather lose an adoption than adopt to someone who would declaw. In the cities that have banned declawing the adoption rates have not decreased and the relinquishment rates have not increased when comparing the data from shelters in those cities 5 years before the ban compared to 5 years after. This data can be provided to you.

Cats naturally use their claws to assist in climbing and maintaining balance, to help them stretch and exercise, and to escape danger. Cats are commonly declawed in an attempt to protect furniture from unwanted scratching. Occasionally, animals

are declawed in a misinformed attempt to protect human health, despite the CDC's and NIH's advice to "not declaw" to prevent opportunistic disease in immunocompromised individuals. There are safe and effective means to manage undesirable scratching behaviors through simple training and other established methods. My own immune-compromised mother lived to be 100 years old with clawed cats all of her life.

In my 18 years of practice I can tell you that there was only one instance where a client thought he had to declaw his cat due to a health issue. All the rest (and mostly these were kittens) were to protect furniture and most of those were "in case the cat scratches the furniture." At the shelter, it was not uncommon to learn that the adopter had already decided to declaw the kitten before they even picked out the kitten because declawing was something that "they just always did to their cats."

Declawing is much worse than the removal of claws, it actually is the amputation of all or most of the last bone of each of the toes of the animal's feet. The American Veterinary Medical Association lists "anesthetic complications (including death), hemorrhage, infection and pain" as potential complications of declawing. Chronic pain syndromes, permanent lameness, and behavior changes have been described in the veterinary scientific literature as complications of declawing.

Declawing is unnecessary and inhumane. As a shelter veterinarian, I am thrilled that it is already banned in my great state of New York, nine US cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco. In many countries, including in the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden, declawing is illegal, or is considered unethical by established professional veterinary organizations. Veterinarians in Canada have recently voted to ban the procedure in 7 provinces.

When the bill is passed, it will stop the injustices that have been caused by veterinarians to cats for the last 50 years. It is time to stop surgically amputating cats and causing life-long pain to suit the needs of humans and their couches. I hope you and your colleagues will vote to approve this bill as written so that cats can live as cats.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan V. Whittred".

Susan V. Whittred, DVM

# **HB 22 - MDVMA 2022 - OPP - Declaw.pdf**

Uploaded by: Josh Howe

Position: UNF



## Maryland Veterinary Medical Association

Wednesday January 19, 2022

### HB 22 - Animal Welfare - Declawing Cats - Prohibited Acts

#### OPPOSE

Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Established in 1886, the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA) is a community of dynamic professionals who are passionate about veterinary medicine and improving the lives of those it touches. MDVMA's mission is to serve as a leading resource for the veterinary community through communication, education, representation, and support for the advancement of animal and public health in Maryland.

House Bill 22 would prohibit a person from performing a declawing procedure on a cat unless the person is a veterinary practitioner (licensed and registered veterinarian) and the procedure is necessary for a "therapeutic purpose". MDVMA surveyed members to gather information on the current practice of the declawing procedure in Maryland. Results from the membership survey illustrate the following conclusions:

- The number of declaws performed in veterinary hospitals in Maryland is 3 per year, on average.
- Over 90% of the veterinarians that do perform declaw will only do so after counseling the pet owner about the details and risks of surgery and offering surgical alternatives, or for extenuating circumstances but not simply on an owner's request.
- Veterinarians that do not perform declaw cited lack of demand, hospital policy, and never learned to perform the procedure.
- Practitioners who have been practicing less than 11 years said they do not perform declaw and/or did not learn the procedure in veterinary college.

To further understand the current practice ~~state~~ of declaw in Maryland, MDVMA actively inquired with cat shelters and internet adoption platforms across the state to determine the universe adoptable cats that have been declawed. MDVMA found that there were 15 adoptable cats that have been declawed, or roughly 0.31% of the observed universe of adoptable cats.

Over the years, the veterinary profession's approach to these procedures has changed drastically. Declawing is rare and may occur after serious counseling with owners about alternatives. Generally, the cat declaw procedure is viewed as a last resort effort to keep a feline companion in the home rather than a shelter. Practitioners discuss declawing concerns with clients and use post-operative medications for pain in cats that would otherwise be displaced from their owners.

To further illustrate this shift in the profession's approach to declaw, **The American Veterinarian Medical Association (AVMA)** recently amended their position on feline declawing in 2020:

*“The AVMA discourages the declawing (onychectomy) of cats as an elective procedure and supports non-surgical alternatives to the procedure. The AVMA respects the veterinarian’s right to use professional judgment when deciding how to best protect their individual patients’ health and welfare. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the veterinarian to counsel the owner about the natural scratching behavior of cats, the alternatives to surgery, as well as the details of the procedure itself and subsequent potential complications. Onychectomy is a surgical amputation and if performed, multi-modal perioperative pain management must be utilized.”*

Currently drafted, HB 22 offers a narrow exception to the ban on declaw. Veterinarian practitioners would be able to perform the procedure if, and only if, it is necessary for a “Therapeutic purpose.” On page 2 of HB 22, beginning on line 22, “Therapeutic Purpose” is defined as:

**(G-1) (1) “THERAPEUTIC PURPOSE” MEANS TO ADDRESS A PHYSICAL OR MEDICAL CONDITION THAT COMPROMISES THE HEALTH OR WELL-BEING OF AN ANIMAL.**

**(2) “THERAPEUTIC PURPOSE” DOES NOT INCLUDE COSMETIC OR AESTHETIC REASONS OR REASONS OF CONVENIENCE IN THE KEEPING OR HANDLING OF THE ANIMAL.**

Similar statutes to HB 22 noted in its fiscal note include: (1) cropping or cutting off the ear of a dog; (2) docking or cutting off the tail of a dog; (3) cutting off the dewclaw of a dog; (4) surgically birthing a dog; and (5) surgically devocalizing a dog or cat. MDVMA asserts, that under these codified statutes, that a veterinary practitioner’s professional judgment is maintained, and not limited, when deciding how to best protect their individual patients’ health and welfare. The limited exception to perform the procedure outlined in HB 22 is defined without regard to a veterinarian’s professional judgement. Many of our members do not perform these procedures at all; however, MDVMA objects to legislating the clinical judgement of practitioners.

MDVMA strongly supports preserving the human- feline bond wherever possible. Consideration of human health circumstances should be included in the “therapeutic definition.” If a cat’s claws are causing injury or illness to a person, then MDVMA practitioners advocate for keeping the cat in the home, and in the rarest of cases, a declawing procedure may be required to do so. Otherwise, the cat risks being surrendered to a shelter and potentially euthanized under those circumstances.

The profession’s national shift to counsel owners on the declaw procedure and offer alternatives, and the fact that there is only a small universe of cats affected by declaw in Maryland, make this bill unnecessary. MDVMA’s primary concern is that this legislation sets new precedent in limiting the judgement of veterinary practitioners to operate within an established veterinary client patient relationship.

MDVMA has shared this perspective with the bill’s sponsor and proponents, offered non legislative solutions to address their concerns, and will continue to engage in discussions on this issue. Unfortunately, as currently drafted, MDVMA opposes this legislation.

***The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association Respectfully Urges an Unfavorable Report***

**Contacts:**

Marisa Francis, MDVMA Executive Director – (717) – 480 – 8376

Moira Cyphers & Josh Howe, Compass Government Relations – (443)-343-7143

**Maryland Veterinary Medical Association**  
8574 Paxton Street, Hummelstown, PA 17036 | (410) 305-7083

# **HB22\_Opposition testimony of the MDVMA\_January 19**

Uploaded by: Josh Howe

Position: UNF

**Wednesday, January 19**

Written Testimony of the  
**Maryland Veterinary Medical Association**



Prepared for the  
**Maryland General Assembly**  
House Environment and Transportation Committee Hearing

**Re: HB0022 Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts**

**Contacts:**

Marisa Francis, MDVMA Executive Director  
(717) 480 – 8376 | [mfrancis@mdvma.org](mailto:mfrancis@mdvma.org)

Moira Cyphers & Josh Howe, Compass Government Relations  
(443) 343-7143

**Mailing Address:**

8574 Paxton Street | Hummelstown, PA 17036  
[www.mdvma.org](http://www.mdvma.org)



Matthew Weeman DVM, MS  
Position: Oppose HB22

I am writing to oppose the legislative language of HB22. As a veterinarian who works with both small and large animals, I believe I am uniquely positioned to provide testimony to our state legislators on this bill.

Veterinarians have been entrusted to make welfare decisions on behalf of animals and in the interest of public health. Veterinarians are uniquely trained to make these decisions and they are highly skilled practitioners. Veterinarians are the experts when it comes to animal welfare. As one of those veterinarians, I do not care if it is a popular position among the constituency when it comes to decisions that impact my patients or the interface between my patient's, practice and public health. I understand our elected representatives do. However, constituent popularity in cases like this tends to reflect the impulses of animal rights organizations and not those of every day individuals. The typical Marylander is not thinking about cat declaws and whether or not it should be legal as a matter of principle.

I understand that perhaps hundreds of letters in support of this proposed ban have likely been submitted, especially within the districts of the bill sponsors. I suspect that these letters are largely disseminated templates used by animal rights agencies to garner support for their particular cause.

The MDVMA has taken a stance in opposition of this bill after previously taking a position of "favorable with amendments" because, even after expressing the concerns of veterinarians in the state, the language of this bill is persistent in an effort to strip veterinarians of their ability to practice within the constraints of a legal, well-regulated veterinary client patient relationship. To effectively fulfill my oath, I must maintain the authority to practice in the best interests of the health and well-being of my patients.

I understand there are perhaps a few veterinarians who are in favor of banning declaws but unfortunately, they have yet to provide a substantial body of evidence that indicates cats who have been declawed today are suffering. Our legislators should be demanding this peer reviewed research prior to making such critical decisions in regards to the appropriateness of the declaw procedure. The declaw procedure of "yesterday" is no longer in practice today, when the legislature received testimony at the last hearing on this proposed legislation as HB445 the proponent of the ban described a barbaric procedure from the 1970s. The profession has moved on from that period and so should this legislature. Today, I rarely perform a declaw but when I do it is practiced with the strictest surgical standards and multi-modal pain therapy. Many practitioners are using laser surgery when performing declaw today which mitigates most of the prior concerns regarding the procedure. The vast majority of the time I will decline to perform a declaw, however there are occasions in which a declaw is the right course to take in order to keep a cat within a loving home.

The American Veterinary Medical Association has discouraged the act of declaw for a number of years now. The standard of care requiring multi-modal pain therapy has been defined and the well functioning Maryland Board of Veterinary Examiners already ensures practitioners adhere to the accepted standards of practice within this state which would require veterinarians to

comply with this standard. Additionally, the American Association of Feline Practitioners has taken a stance discouraging the act of declaw. Most veterinarians today are not performing the declaw procedure. Most of organized veterinary medicine today discourages the procedure from being performed in all but the rarest of circumstances. In spite of the encouragement of these organizations to forego the procedure, that is not a reason to create legislation which would ban it. The fact that the profession has acknowledged the procedure should only be performed in rare situations and only under the strictest of care guidelines, after counseling clientele about the alternatives, should exemplify the fact that the veterinarians of Maryland are members of a well-functioning profession capable of addressing the concerns of our patients and clientele. The Centers for Disease Control also acknowledges the importance of the VCPR when it discourages declaw for disease prevention practices but recommends that concerned individuals speak with their veterinarian.

If the steps the veterinary profession have taken nationwide and within Maryland to reduce the frequency of declaw aren't considered proof enough, the legislative body should seek information regarding the number of cats in this state that are available for adoption and declawed. The number is very small. I myself called every county shelter in the state to find more information about those that were declawed. There was only one available under the age of 6 and none of the cats available for adoption were cited as behavioral surrenders. This legislation is neither required to ensure the welfare of cats or to regulate a profession already performing at the highest standards. This legislation may in fact be harmful to the welfare of cats in the state. On rare occasions when a cat needs to be declawed for a non-medical purpose such as destructive behavior that can not be mitigated otherwise, the act of declaw is likely the only option to keep that cat in a loving home. In my experience, by the time a client comes to me requesting declaw of their cat we can generally reduce the destructive behavior with training and other modalities like claw caps etc. However, there are occasions when these techniques fail or when it's simply not possible for an arthritic client to apply caps to her cat's paws on a monthly basis. When a destructive cat begins to damage a rental property etc. clients who really do love the animal are sometimes forced to make a difficult choice. Removing the ability of these clients to have the cat declawed to keep the patient in the home is really not in the best interest of the cat. Shelters are overwhelmed with unwanted cats and older cats surrendered to a shelter for destructive behavior are unlikely to ever be adopted.

While the number of declawed cats in our state shelter system is exceedingly low, the number of cats in our shelter system is always high. Adding to the number, by limiting the ability of people to keep a destructive animal after declawing it will almost certainly result in higher rates of abandonment and euthanasia. I also question the motives of this legislation. I am concerned the motive is more about limiting the legal practice of veterinarians and less about protecting cats. There simply is no proof that cats are in need of protection from declaws-the preponderance of evidence suggests cats aren't really being declawed and the shelters don't have any available for adoption. There's certainly no evidence that suffering cats are flooding our shelter system.

I don't understand the impulsive urge of state legislators to get involved with this. For perspective, state legislators have believed constituents want: cage free eggs, free range chicken, rBST free milk, and bans on antibiotics but in reality the cage free eggs are not selling, the free range chicken is being discounted at a tremendous loss and rBST milk is not a premium product,

it's now standard. The largest organic dairy on the Eastern Shore of Maryland is now sitting empty. Our legislature banned therapeutic administration of antibiotics for dairy cows last year and we have yet to figure out how to safely implement that plan, let alone enforce this ban. This present bill is not about dairy farms or food animals but we do have the ability to reflect on the actions of this state's legislature to determine the negative impacts the decisions it makes in regards to veterinary medicine can have on the constituents of this state. When we lose our dairy farms we compromise food security for Marylanders. I am of the firm belief that few of our state representatives take the time to appropriately consider these impacts. The practice of veterinary medicine is complex. It is ill-advised to have a state legislature that seeks to regulate veterinary medicine through legislative authority. Veterinarians are already subject to the board of veterinary medical examiners review and oversight. The board believes the decision of a declaw should be between a veterinarian and client with whom a Veterinary-Client-Patient-Relationship has been established. Additionally, as a profession, the American Veterinary Medical Association has taken a stand on declaw and has firmly defined the standard of care in regards to the procedure itself. Veterinarians are responsive, there has been no evidence to support the legislatures need to regulate it. Our state legislature should not risk making a deleterious decision in regards to the practice of veterinary medicine within our state.

This is animal rights driven legislation that is effectively undermining the health and well being of animals and the public.

I firmly believe that what we are seeing is a new arm of the animal rights agenda here and precedence will matter. Maryland should not set the precedence of negating the veterinary client patient relationship. The state legislature must not delegate animal welfare decisions to the public, animal rights agencies or the cat sanctuaries. As a profession we are functioning responsibly and ensuring that when a declaw is performed there is a high standard of care. For this reason, I am opposed to delegating my scope of practice to the state legislature. There is simply no reason for it. State legislators who vote in support of this bill are voting to delegitimize the veterinary professionals of this state who have made it clear, that we, as the experts on animal welfare have this under control. We are capable of functioning as a profession and self regulating. We are capable of ensuring the health and well-being of our patients. We are capable of adjusting to and elevating the standard of care and ultimately we are capable of serving as the decision maker, in consultation with our clients, about what is the most appropriate way to take care of their pets. This is not a responsibility the state legislature needs to take on. Veterinarians are not performing this procedure for financial gain.

At the end of the day the veterinarians of this state rarely perform declaws because less people want them and veterinarians have indicated they take the decision to perform this procedure seriously, they counsel clients prior to doing so-as is now required by the AVMA and they are required to adhere to the standard of care which includes certain operative techniques as well as multi-modal pain therapy or risk punitive professional measures by their respective state board of veterinary medical examiners who looks to the AVMA as a resource when defining the "standard of care".

I don't believe for one minute this is constituent driven. The voters of Maryland could not care less. This is animal rights activism at work. The HSUS came out with the campaign to correlate a

declaw with amputation of the tip of the finger and that made people uncomfortable. Including some veterinarians who really should take a better look at their anatomy books and recognize that a lot of bones may be named the same and yet function differently between species. Anthropomorphism is a signature move of animal rights agencies and our state legislators should be willing to forego the desire to respond favorably to such tactics.

Some argue that no person should have the right to amputate the digit of a cat for any reason. That is a matter of opinion. After making laws forbidding the declaw procedure it becomes a dangerous matter of precedence. I happen to believe ripping the sex organs from animals is a pretty painful practice and last I checked we didn't consult the animals prior to performing that procedure. Removing the ovary of a cat has no more benefit to her than removing her claw. It's done for the human. In some ways it's done in the interest of public health. Our legislators should be careful to understand the precedent they set when they are limiting the scope of veterinary medicine by legislative mandate. Upon banning declaws, activists will use this as an opportunity to ban other necessary procedures in the name of animal rights and it will be easier to do when the precedent for limiting the scope of the VCPR has already been set.

This proposed ban on declaws is going to be a pivotal piece of legislation we, as a state, will look back on. I hope our state legislators can have the integrity to listen to the veterinary professionals and oppose, this legislation to make certain we don't come to realize the powerful negative potential of such legislation.

Resources:

<https://www.fb.org/market-intel/cage-free-eggs-were-once-expected-to-dominate-the-egg-market>

<https://www.iasoybeans.com/news/articles/food-label-fatigue-consumer-survey-shows-iowans-find-branding-claims-misleading/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/serenitygibbons/2019/04/27/why-your-customer-surveys-are-probably-inaccurate/#2e18949465bf>

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/declawing-domestic-cats>

Sincerely,



Dr. Matthew Weeman  
Mobile: 330.317.1286  
Centreville, Maryland 21617  
Mweeman.7@gmail.com

## House Bill 22 (Declawing Cats) – OPPOSE

January 17, 2022

Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

As the first cat-only veterinarian in Maryland, a past-president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association, I have some insight into most feline health and welfare considerations. During this session I am asking the members of this Committee and entire Maryland State Legislature to **oppose HB 22** prohibiting the declawing of cats.

I understand and agree with many of the reasons HB 22's supporters oppose declawing, and I have not performed declaws in more than a decade. Most people don't even know why cats use their claws, and that it's normal behavior, not "bad" or "destructive" behavior. Even fewer know why, how, and where to provide resources for cats to use their claws safely. Thankfully, there are solutions that satisfy both normal behavior (cat's perspective) and desirable behavior (person's perspective). It just takes education, collaboration, and patience to ensure a happy and healthy home.

In the past, my position on this bill was favorable with amendments. The opportunities to discuss possible amendment parameters has occurred multiple times over the past couple of years. Our oppose is a direct response to the advocates being completely unwilling to compromise despite our openness to come to an agreement that works for everyone. I am open to further dialog. It just takes education, collaboration, and patience to pass meaningful and effective legislation to ensure a happy and healthy community.

Respectfully,

Jane Brunt, DVM  
Cat Hospital At Towson (CHAT)  
CATalyst Council, Inc.  
PO Box 3064  
Annapolis, MD 21403  
*mobile: 410-627-7921*

[jbrunt@catdoc.com](mailto:jbrunt@catdoc.com)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/janebrunt/>

<https://catdoc.com/>

<https://catalystcouncil.org>



## House Bill 22 (Declawing Cats)—Oppose

January 16, 2022

To: Maryland Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Rebecca Owens, DVM, Chief of Staff Banfield Greenbelt Maryland; Maryland Licensed Veterinarian #4509; Co-Chair Maryland Veterinary Medical Association Continuing Education Committee

Contact Information: Home address—2318 Westport Lane, Crofton, MD 21114

Email—[rebeccaowens820@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccaowens820@gmail.com)

Phone—mobile (904)599-5939 and work (301) 441-1139

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting my written testimony regarding my opinion and expertise on declawing of cats. I have been a small animal veterinarian since 1995 and have practiced in both Maryland and Florida. I am currently practicing in Greenbelt Maryland and see on average 80 pets per week for routine care.

At the start of my career declawing cats was routine and I became very skilled at this surgery, performing perhaps 3-4 every week for several years. Clients requested it because they did not want to be physically harmed by their cats as well as wanting to protect their physical property (furniture) from destruction. I used general anesthesia, and multi modal pain control for this surgery. I experienced very few complications because I took extra care with this type of surgery in my attention to detail. In the past I have even declawed my own cats and have not witnessed any ill effects from it. Both post operative and long-term behavior was all normal. More recently, declawing has fallen out of popularity among pet owners due to concerns surrounding the necessity of the surgery. A better understanding of natural feline behaviors are now discussed and recommended with clients. The popularity of the surgery has dramatically decreased over the years. I have not performed a declaw surgery in over 5 years.

In my day to day practice few clients ask about the procedure. When I am asked about it I counsel the clients on alternatives to the surgery such as training their cats to use a scratching post, keeping the nails trimmed at home, or applying soft tips to the claws. On rare occasions a client will ask about the surgery due to a personal health concern with being scratched. For example, if a client is taking blood thinners or is immunocompromised then the conversation may lead to the potential for the surgery. In my experience if a cat is scratching their owner, then it is a behavior issue and the cat is biting that owner as well. These cases tend to do better with behavior modification

therapy—a combination of medications with training and environmental changes that will decrease the unwanted behaviors.

On rare occasions I have recommended the surgery with polydactyl cats (cats with extra and deformed toes). Even then I will only declaw the extra toes that tend to overgrow into the paw pad thus causing the cat pain. In these situations, the cat actually benefits from the surgery by avoiding overgrown nails and pain.

I seriously question the need to pass laws regulating the practice of my profession as it relates to animal welfare issues and as such, oppose House Bill 22. Veterinarians are already leaders in their communities as animal welfare experts. The day I graduated from veterinary school I took an oath to "...promote animal health and welfare, relieve animal suffering, protect the health of the public and environment...". I live this oath every day.

Please feel free to contact me for any further details or clarification surrounding my opinion on House Bill 22.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Owens, DVM

Jeanne Sanders, LFACHE  
9912 Foxborough Circle  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
301-520-7243

[jeanegracesanders@gmail.com](mailto:jeanegracesanders@gmail.com)

January 16, 2022

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.



Page 2

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*

Jeanne Sanders, LFACHE



January 17, 2022

Ms. Marisa Francis  
Executive Director  
Maryland Veterinary Medical Association  
8574 Paxton Street  
Hummelstown, PA 17036

**Re: MD HB 22, concerning Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts**

Dear Ms. Francis:

I am writing to express the American Veterinary Medical Association's opposition to HB 22, which would prohibit the declawing of cats and impose disciplinary actions, including the revocation of a license, for performing the procedure. Although the AVMA discourages onychectomy (declawing) of cats as an elective procedure and encourages veterinarians to counsel their clients about non-surgical alternatives, we have grave concerns about legislative and regulatory actions that remove the professional judgment of veterinarians in determining when to perform specific veterinary procedures.

***Good animal health and welfare is supported by the veterinarian's ability to apply professional judgment within the context of the veterinarian-client-patient relationship***

The adoption of HB 22 would circumvent the professional judgment of Maryland veterinarians and disrupt the veterinarian-client-patient relationship, which has long been the foundation of veterinary medical practice. Best health and welfare outcomes for veterinary patients, clients, and the public require that decisions involving the diagnosis and treatment of veterinary patients—including the performance of surgical procedures, such as declawing—be made by the animal's veterinarian in consultation with the animal's owner. This ensures that each animal receives the best possible care that is uniquely tailored to its needs. Veterinarians must retain authority to exercise professional judgment in making clinical recommendations that are in the best interest of their patients.

***Viable alternatives to legislative and regulatory action***

With respect to onychectomy, and as an alternative to legislative and/or regulatory action, the AVMA strongly recommends that veterinarians thoroughly educate cat owners about the normal scratching behaviors of cats and that they support their clients in exploring and implementing alternatives to declawing.

The AVMA assists veterinarians in their efforts by providing educational resources (example attached) that can help them communicate effectively with their clients. If such alternatives fail, with a potential consequence being the relinquishment and/or euthanasia of the cat, then onychectomy becomes the option of last resort. These statements are supported by a survey of veterinary practices that revealed most veterinarians recommend nonsurgical alternatives to onychectomy and that veterinarians who perform the surgery do so infrequently, at a rate of one procedure or fewer per month.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Pain management and patient outcomes***

Veterinarians recognize that onychectomy is a major surgery. Perioperative pain management is necessary and required for this procedure. Just as for other surgical procedures, advancements in knowledge and technology mean that onychectomy procedures have evolved. Contemporary approaches to onychectomy have resulted in fewer surgical complications and better patient outcomes.

Declawing is a controversial procedure; however, we speak for the profession in voicing our opposition to HB 22 and ask that every effort be made to ensure that veterinarians retain their ability to apply their professional judgment when it comes to medical and surgical decisions that impact the health and welfare of their patients. Veterinarians have an obligation to consider the unique needs of the patient that is in front of them and a duty to inform their clients of a given procedure's risks, benefits, and alternatives. Declawing is neither unique nor singular in that regard. We thank you for supporting our patients, their owners, and our profession by protecting the ability of veterinarians to act in their patients' best interests.

For questions regarding this letter, please contact Dr. Kendall Houlihan, Assistant Director, Division of Animal Welfare, at 847-285-6685 or [khoulihan@avma.org](mailto:khoulihan@avma.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet D. Donlin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Janet D. Donlin, DVM, CAE  
Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer

<sup>1</sup>Ruch-Gallie R, Hellyer PW, Schoenfeld-Tacher R, et al. Survey of practices and perceptions regarding feline onychectomy among private practitioners. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2016;249(3):291-298.



## Important things to consider when making the decision **DECLAW...OR NOT?**

**Scratching is a normal behavior of cats.** It conditions the claws, serves as a visual and scent territorial marker, allows the cat to defend itself, and provides healthy muscle engagement through stretching. In many cases, a cat can be trained to scratch only appropriate surfaces. However, a cat's excessive or inappropriate scratching behavior can become destructive or cause injury to people in the home.

### ALTERNATIVE TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

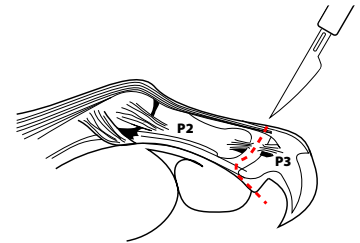
- Providing appropriate scratching surfaces, such as dedicated posts and boards that are tall enough to encourage full stretching. What constitutes an attractive surface or location varies by cat, so don't be afraid to get creative! Scenting with catnip may help too.
- Frequent nail trims - every 1-2 weeks
- Nail caps - replaced every 4-6 weeks
- Positive reinforcement training, beginning with kitten kindergarten if available
- Pheromone sprays and/or plug-ins
- Discourage use of inappropriate surfaces by attaching sticky tape or tinfoil
- Punishment is not an effective deterrent

### WHEN THE ALTERNATIVES AREN'T ENOUGH

When undesirable scratching is not able to be successfully managed, or a member of the household is immunocompromised with a higher risk of health complications as a result of accidental scratches, declawing may be the only alternative to relinquishment or euthanasia. While not a first choice, nor a minor procedure, if properly performed declawing may allow a pet cat to remain in an otherwise good home.

Declawing is the surgical amputation of a cat's claws and the third toe bones to which they are attached.

Most cats will still exhibit scratching behavior after declawing. If performed, this elective orthopedic surgery requires general anesthesia and comprehensive pain management under the care of an experienced veterinarian. Like any major surgical procedure, possible complications include short- and long-term pain, bleeding, infection, and wound reopening.



### MAKE A THOUGHTFUL CHOICE

Because elective declawing is performed for the benefit of the owner rather than the cat, the procedure remains controversial. The decision to have a cat declawed should be carefully considered in consultation with your veterinarian. Declawing should only be performed after reasonable behavior modification attempts and alternatives have been exhausted. Declawed cats should not be allowed outdoors, unless they are under direct supervision.

To learn more visit [avma.org/declaw](https://www.avma.org/declaw)

# **Testimony\_Dr. Lawrence Giebel.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lawrence Giebel

Position: UNF

Lawrence James Giebel DVM  
Quince Orchard Veterinary Hospital  
11910 Darnestown Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

January 17,2022

Re: HB22 Cat Declawing – OPPOSE

I believe that removing a cat's toenails using a Surgical Laser can greatly increase the opportunity for better health and happiness of both the cat and the human in "Special Situations", without causing extreme pain or suffering for the cat.

I consider removing a cat's toe nails as a "Special Needs Procedure". When a human "needs" his companion for the human's mental and physical health, but has a "Special Condition" such as an immunocompromised disease or anticoagulant issues, the human's Doctor may encourage his patient to "get rid of his cat" because of the danger of "cat scratch fever" or bleeding issues. That solution can result in a miserable human and a miserable cat. However, if a veterinarian can offer the solution of a Laser Surgery to remove that cat's toe nails, I believe that both the cat and the human will have a happier, healthier life.

I have been using a Surgical Laser for all of my patient's surgeries for over 20 years. I can remove a tumor on a tiny parakeet, remove toenails on a cat or perform a spay on a hundred- pound dog using a surgical laser with the same excellent results. The Laser generates a miraculous recovery for every surgery as compared to the slow painful recovery from scalpel surgery. As the beam from the laser cuts tissue, it also seals all of the blood vessels, which stops the bleeding and it also seals all of the nerve endings, which stops the pain. Before I had the surgical laser, I needed to send home lots of pain medications after surgery, now I send home lots of medications to reduce pet's activity so the pet can heal safely!

I believe that allowing a veterinarian to remove a cat's toe nails using a Surgical Laser in "Special Needs Situations" can have a very positive outcome for both the cat and the human who share a special bond. Therefore, I recommend that the You defeat the "Declawing Cat Bill".

# **Testimony\_Jeanne Sanders.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marisa Francis

Position: UNF

Jeanne Sanders, LFACHE  
9912 Foxborough Circle  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
301-520-7243

[jeanegracesanders@gmail.com](mailto:jeanegracesanders@gmail.com)

January 16, 2022

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.



Page 2

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*

Jeanne Sanders, LFACHE

# **Testimony\_Dr. Matthew Weeman.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matthew Weeman

Position: UNF

Matthew Weeman DVM, MS  
Position: Oppose HB22

I am writing to oppose the legislative language of HB22. As a veterinarian who works with both small and large animals, I believe I am uniquely positioned to provide testimony to our state legislators on this bill.

Veterinarians have been entrusted to make welfare decisions on behalf of animals and in the interest of public health. Veterinarians are uniquely trained to make these decisions and they are highly skilled practitioners. Veterinarians are the experts when it comes to animal welfare. As one of those veterinarians, I do not care if it is a popular position among the constituency when it comes to decisions that impact my patients or the interface between my patient's, practice and public health. I understand our elected representatives do. However, constituent popularity in cases like this tends to reflect the impulses of animal rights organizations and not those of every day individuals. The typical Marylander is not thinking about cat declaws and whether or not it should be legal as a matter of principle.

I understand that perhaps hundreds of letters in support of this proposed ban have likely been submitted, especially within the districts of the bill sponsors. I suspect that these letters are largely disseminated templates used by animal rights agencies to garner support for their particular cause.

The MDVMA has taken a stance in opposition of this bill after previously taking a position of "favorable with amendments" because, even after expressing the concerns of veterinarians in the state, the language of this bill is persistent in an effort to strip veterinarians of their ability to practice within the constraints of a legal, well-regulated veterinary client patient relationship. To effectively fulfill my oath, I must maintain the authority to practice in the best interests of the health and well-being of my patients.

I understand there are perhaps a few veterinarians who are in favor of banning declaws but unfortunately, they have yet to provide a substantial body of evidence that indicates cats who have been declawed today are suffering. Our legislators should be demanding this peer reviewed research prior to making such critical decisions in regards to the appropriateness of the declaw procedure. The declaw procedure of "yesterday" is no longer in practice today, when the legislature received testimony at the last hearing on this proposed legislation as HB445 the proponent of the ban described a barbaric procedure from the 1970s. The profession has moved on from that period and so should this legislature. Today, I rarely perform a declaw but when I do it is practiced with the strictest surgical standards and multi-modal pain therapy. Many practitioners are using laser surgery when performing declaw today which mitigates most of the prior concerns regarding the procedure. The vast majority of the time I will decline to perform a declaw, however there are occasions in which a declaw is the right course to take in order to keep a cat within a loving home.

The American Veterinary Medical Association has discouraged the act of declaw for a number of years now. The standard of care requiring multi-modal pain therapy has been defined and the well functioning Maryland Board of Veterinary Examiners already ensures practitioners adhere to the accepted standards of practice within this state which would require veterinarians to

comply with this standard. Additionally, the American Association of Feline Practitioners has taken a stance discouraging the act of declaw. Most veterinarians today are not performing the declaw procedure. Most of organized veterinary medicine today discourages the procedure from being performed in all but the rarest of circumstances. In spite of the encouragement of these organizations to forego the procedure, that is not a reason to create legislation which would ban it. The fact that the profession has acknowledged the procedure should only be performed in rare situations and only under the strictest of care guidelines, after counseling clientele about the alternatives, should exemplify the fact that the veterinarians of Maryland are members of a well-functioning profession capable of addressing the concerns of our patients and clientele. The Centers for Disease Control also acknowledges the importance of the VCPR when it discourages declaw for disease prevention practices but recommends that concerned individuals speak with their veterinarian.

If the steps the veterinary profession have taken nationwide and within Maryland to reduce the frequency of declaw aren't considered proof enough, the legislative body should seek information regarding the number of cats in this state that are available for adoption and declawed. The number is very small. I myself called every county shelter in the state to find more information about those that were declawed. There was only one available under the age of 6 and none of the cats available for adoption were cited as behavioral surrenders. This legislation is neither required to ensure the welfare of cats or to regulate a profession already performing at the highest standards. This legislation may in fact be harmful to the welfare of cats in the state. On rare occasions when a cat needs to be declawed for a non-medical purpose such as destructive behavior that can not be mitigated otherwise, the act of declaw is likely the only option to keep that cat in a loving home. In my experience, by the time a client comes to me requesting declaw of their cat we can generally reduce the destructive behavior with training and other modalities like claw caps etc. However, there are occasions when these techniques fail or when it's simply not possible for an arthritic client to apply caps to her cat's paws on a monthly basis. When a destructive cat begins to damage a rental property etc. clients who really do love the animal are sometimes forced to make a difficult choice. Removing the ability of these clients to have the cat declawed to keep the patient in the home is really not in the best interest of the cat. Shelters are overwhelmed with unwanted cats and older cats surrendered to a shelter for destructive behavior are unlikely to ever be adopted.

While the number of declawed cats in our state shelter system is exceedingly low, the number of cats in our shelter system is always high. Adding to the number, by limiting the ability of people to keep a destructive animal after declawing it will almost certainly result in higher rates of abandonment and euthanasia. I also question the motives of this legislation. I am concerned the motive is more about limiting the legal practice of veterinarians and less about protecting cats. There simply is no proof that cats are in need of protection from declaws-the preponderance of evidence suggests cats aren't really being declawed and the shelters don't have any available for adoption. There's certainly no evidence that suffering cats are flooding our shelter system.

I don't understand the impulsive urge of state legislators to get involved with this. For perspective, state legislators have believed constituents want: cage free eggs, free range chicken, rBST free milk, and bans on antibiotics but in reality the cage free eggs are not selling, the free range chicken is being discounted at a tremendous loss and rBST milk is not a premium product,

it's now standard. The largest organic dairy on the Eastern Shore of Maryland is now sitting empty. Our legislature banned therapeutic administration of antibiotics for dairy cows last year and we have yet to figure out how to safely implement that plan, let alone enforce this ban. This present bill is not about dairy farms or food animals but we do have the ability to reflect on the actions of this state's legislature to determine the negative impacts the decisions it makes in regards to veterinary medicine can have on the constituents of this state. When we lose our dairy farms we compromise food security for Marylanders. I am of the firm belief that few of our state representatives take the time to appropriately consider these impacts. The practice of veterinary medicine is complex. It is ill-advised to have a state legislature that seeks to regulate veterinary medicine through legislative authority. Veterinarians are already subject to the board of veterinary medical examiners review and oversight. The board believes the decision of a declaw should be between a veterinarian and client with whom a Veterinary-Client-Patient-Relationship has been established. Additionally, as a profession, the American Veterinary Medical Association has taken a stand on declaw and has firmly defined the standard of care in regards to the procedure itself. Veterinarians are responsive, there has been no evidence to support the legislatures need to regulate it. Our state legislature should not risk making a deleterious decision in regards to the practice of veterinary medicine within our state.

This is animal rights driven legislation that is effectively undermining the health and well being of animals and the public.

I firmly believe that what we are seeing is a new arm of the animal rights agenda here and precedence will matter. Maryland should not set the precedence of negating the veterinary client patient relationship. The state legislature must not delegate animal welfare decisions to the public, animal rights agencies or the cat sanctuaries. As a profession we are functioning responsibly and ensuring that when a declaw is performed there is a high standard of care. For this reason, I am opposed to delegating my scope of practice to the state legislature. There is simply no reason for it. State legislators who vote in support of this bill are voting to delegitimize the veterinary professionals of this state who have made it clear, that we, as the experts on animal welfare have this under control. We are capable of functioning as a profession and self regulating. We are capable of ensuring the health and well-being of our patients. We are capable of adjusting to and elevating the standard of care and ultimately we are capable of serving as the decision maker, in consultation with our clients, about what is the most appropriate way to take care of their pets. This is not a responsibility the state legislature needs to take on. Veterinarians are not performing this procedure for financial gain.

At the end of the day the veterinarians of this state rarely perform declaws because less people want them and veterinarians have indicated they take the decision to perform this procedure seriously, they counsel clients prior to doing so-as is now required by the AVMA and they are required to adhere to the standard of care which includes certain operative techniques as well as multi-modal pain therapy or risk punitive professional measures by their respective state board of veterinary medical examiners who looks to the AVMA as a resource when defining the "standard of care".

I don't believe for one minute this is constituent driven. The voters of Maryland could not care less. This is animal rights activism at work. The HSUS came out with the campaign to correlate a

declaw with amputation of the tip of the finger and that made people uncomfortable. Including some veterinarians who really should take a better look at their anatomy books and recognize that a lot of bones may be named the same and yet function differently between species. Anthropomorphism is a signature move of animal rights agencies and our state legislators should be willing to forego the desire to respond favorably to such tactics.

Some argue that no person should have the right to amputate the digit of a cat for any reason. That is a matter of opinion. After making laws forbidding the declaw procedure it becomes a dangerous matter of precedence. I happen to believe ripping the sex organs from animals is a pretty painful practice and last I checked we didn't consult the animals prior to performing that procedure. Removing the ovary of a cat has no more benefit to her than removing her claw. It's done for the human. In some ways it's done in the interest of public health. Our legislators should be careful to understand the precedent they set when they are limiting the scope of veterinary medicine by legislative mandate. Upon banning declaws, activists will use this as an opportunity to ban other necessary procedures in the name of animal rights and it will be easier to do when the precedent for limiting the scope of the VCPR has already been set.

This proposed ban on declaws is going to be a pivotal piece of legislation we, as a state, will look back on. I hope our state legislators can have the integrity to listen to the veterinary professionals and oppose, this legislation to make certain we don't come to realize the powerful negative potential of such legislation.

Resources:

<https://www.fb.org/market-intel/cage-free-eggs-were-once-expected-to-dominate-the-egg-market>

<https://www.iasoybeans.com/news/articles/food-label-fatigue-consumer-survey-shows-iowans-find-branding-claims-misleading/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/serenitygibbons/2019/04/27/why-your-customer-surveys-are-probably-inaccurate/#2e18949465bf>

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/declawing-domestic-cats>

Sincerely,



Dr. Matthew Weeman  
Mobile: 330.317.1286  
Centreville, Maryland 21617  
Mweeman.7@gmail.com