



To: Agriculture Chesapeake and Natural Resources, Agriculture Subcommittee
From: Animal Legal Defense Fund
Re: Support Letter for HB 1382
Date: January 17, 2023

Dear Chair Webert and the Agriculture Subcommittee:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is the nation's preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals and has been working for over four decades to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Virginia, I respectfully ask that you support HB 1382, which would prohibit nontherapeutic cat declawing in the Commonwealth.

Declawing is an invasive amputation surgery in which the last bone of each toe is removed. It is often performed for the convenience of humans, *not* the well-being of cats, to prevent natural behaviors such as scratching on furniture. Because cats are digitigrades (animals who walk on their toes), declawing can cause debilitating, lifelong pain. Declawing alters the way that a cat walks, and over time, this imbalance can cause complications in both the paws and back. Lameness, infection, dead tissue, nerve damage, and bone spurs are also common after declawing procedures. Studies have shown that declawing can contribute to behavioral issues as well. Cats often resort to biting when threatened because they have been stripped of their primary defense mechanism – and cat bites pose a significant injury and infection risk to humans. Declawing also fundamentally hinders a cat's natural instincts to use their claws to stretch, scratch, and mark territory appropriately.

There are extremely rare circumstances, such as infection in the nailbed, in which declawing surgery is necessary – and HB 1382 includes a reasonable exemption for those cases so that veterinarians can continue to treat their patients in accordance with the best interests of the cat.

Humane alternatives to declawing, such as scratching posts, nail caps, and regular nail trimming render the procedure unnecessary, except in therapeutic purposes for the benefit of the cat's well-being. HB 1382 is a commonsense bill that will protect cats from pain and suffering. Please support this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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