

May 21, 2025

New Jersey State Senate
Senate Economic Growth Committee
via electronic mail only

Re: Proponent testimony to SB 1406

Dear Chair Cruz-Perez and Honorable Members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee,

On behalf of Alley Cat Allies and our over 64,000 supporters in New Jersey, I submit this written testimony as a proponent of Senate Bill 1406 ("SB 1406"), a bill currently under your guidance. If enacted into law, SB 1406 will prohibit the declawing of cats, a cruel and painful procedure that involves severing a cat's toes at the knuckle. Alley Cat Allies urges the Committee to support this bill to protect cats throughout the state.

Alley Cat Allies was founded in 1990 and is the leader of the global movement to protect and improve the lives of cats and kittens. As the leading advocacy organization for cats, we work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public toward humane, nonlethal, effective laws and policies that serve the best interests of cats and the communities in which they live.

Also known as onychectomy, declawing is the surgical amputation of a cat's toes that is virtually always performed for non-therapeutic purposes. A common but misguided motivation for declawing is to prevent cats from scratching furniture.¹ Many opponents of declawing bans claim that more cats will be relinquished to shelters by frustrated owners, or never find homes at all, if declaw surgery is no longer permitted.² This has not proven to be the case.

After the City of Los Angeles banned declawing in 2009, the number of cats being relinquished to shelters *decreased* by 43 percent.³ Similarly, a peer-reviewed study on the impact of British Columbia's 2018 ban on declawing concluded that "legislation banning elective onychectomy does not increase the risk of feline shelter relinquishment – for destructive behavior or overall – and is unlikely to have a significant effect on shelter euthanasia or length of stay."⁴

The facts demonstrate that declawing itself causes the behaviors that lead people to relinquish cats. A declawed cat is more likely to exhibit increased aggression and biting to compensate for losing her protective claws, her first line of defense. Declawing also leads to chronic pain, arthritis, balance issues, and back problems. The residual pain associated with declawing can also result in refusal to use the litter box. Biting, aggression, expensive medical issues, and litter box avoidance are among the most common reasons cats lose their homes and are brought to shelters.

Thanks to years of humane education and outreach by Alley Cat Allies and other advocates, Americans increasingly realize how detrimental declawing can be to a cat's well-being. More have come to learn that declawing is a non-therapeutic and unnecessary surgery that is far more severe than a nail trim.

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 and life. We do not remove a puppy's teeth to prevent him from chewing on shoes. Instead, understanding this is a behavioral need in response to teething, we provide the puppy with appropriate toys that allow him to carry out his instinctive desire to chew and minimize the discomfort.

Similarly, we should not surgically remove a cat's toes and permanently alter her health and well-being when humane behavior modifications are available and affordable.⁵ Scratching posts, deterrents, regular trimming, nail caps, and plenty of toys help to redirect this natural and necessary instinct.

For all of the reasons above, declawing bans are being considered and enacted in more communities every year. New York state enacted a ban in 2019, and Maryland followed in 2022. Virginia adopted its own declaw ban in 2024, while Massachusetts officially signed a declaw ban into law in early 2025. Washington, D.C., and over a dozen major cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, and Pittsburgh, also prohibit this procedure. Around the world, at least 42 countries, including Switzerland, Germany, and the United Kingdom, have prohibited the declawing of cats.

The State of New Jersey has the opportunity to stand at the forefront of our nation's humane movement and set a wide-reaching example to ensure cats no longer suffer from the inhumane and painful procedure that is declawing.

I encourage the members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee to **support SB 1406 and keep cats' claws on their paws.**

Sincerely,



DanaMarie Pannella
Director of Law and Policy
Alley Cat Allies

¹ The Paw Project, *Frequently Asked Questions About Feline Declawing*, <http://www.pawproject.org/faqs/>

² 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>.

³ Brenda Barnette, general manager of Los Angeles Animal Services Department, February 2021.

⁴ Ellis et al., "Effect of a provincial feline onychectomy ban on cat intake and euthanasia in a British Columbia animal shelter system," *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, September, 2021

⁵ <https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/cat-behavior-scratching/>, 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.