

Public Policy Position
HB 4674

The Animal Law Section is a voluntary membership section of the State Bar of Michigan, comprised of 267 members. The Animal Law Section is not the State Bar of Michigan and the position expressed herein is that of the Animal Law Section only and not the State Bar of Michigan. To date, the State Bar does not have a position on this item.

The Animal Law Section has a public policy decision-making body with 15 members. On June 14, 2023, the Section adopted its position after an electronic discussion and vote. 12 members voted in favor of the Section's position, 0 members voted against this position, 0 members abstained, 3 members did not vote.

Support

Explanation:

The Animal Law Section supports HB 4674, which would amend the Michigan Public Health Code to prohibit veterinarians from performing any type of declawing procedure on a cat unless the procedure served a therapeutic purpose for the cat. Scratching is a normal, instinctual behavior that cats do to condition their claws, mark territory, stretch, and tone muscles. Surgical procedures, typically referred to as “declawing” procedures, are sometimes seen as a solution to scratching behavior in the home that causes damage. But contrary to what the name implies, the procedures involve an amputation of the last bone of each of the cat’s toes. Declawing procedures come with physical and behavioral risks. As with any surgery, there are risks associated with general anesthesia and the potential for surgical complications, such as bleeding, infection, lameness, nerve and tissue damage, and death. These procedures can result in acute and chronic pain. According to a report published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 33% of cats undergoing a declaw surgery experience at least one behavioral problem, including an increase in biting frequency or intensity and not using the litterbox. Studies have shown that prohibiting declawing does not result in cats being surrendered to animal shelters. There are humane alternatives to declawing that can be used to address unwanted scratching behaviors.

Contact Person: Ann M. Griffin

Email: annmgriffin@hotmail.com