

Dear Ms. Hernandez,

Because I believe the fight against cruelty has no national borders, I write from the UK to respectfully ask that you oppose Bill HB3494-A unless the loopholes are closed. I have copied below, an e-mail I have just sent to the Bill's author, setting out my reasons for this request.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley J. Swaine

Dear Rep. Barton,

I write from the U.K. as a lifelong cat owner (I'm 62) and supporter of animal welfare groups which, since I learned comparatively recently of the horrific practice in the USA and Canada, of declawing cats, includes a USA group campaigning to outlaw this practice in keeping with the rest of the developed world and many countries in the developing world.

I understand you believe this procedure gives a cat a better chance of remaining in its home, and I know the counter arguments, but the fact is that as long as this procedure is an option, it will be undertaken by those too lazy or too uncaring to bother finding means to modify a cat's furniture scratching IF, and it is very much IF, that cat does scratch the furniture. Not all cats do and there are very few that cannot be deterred with a bit of effort, and with the greater knowledge of cat (and all animal) behaviour, and the advent of animal behaviourists in the past 20-30 years, there really is no excuse for this mutilation.

I am particularly disturbed when I see that the operation is performed as a pre-emptive measure - especially in rescue shelters - even though this is contrary to the AMVA ruling that it should be performed as a last resort. The major animal rescue organisations in the U.K. always list on their re-homing web pages, why an animal has come into their care. I have two cats from such organisations, adopted one and three years ago after extensive searching. Rarely is destructiveness in the home cited, the principal reasons, apart from being found as a stray are death or illness of the owner, marital/relationship breakdown, owner moving to property which doesn't allow pets, allergy to the cat and inappropriate toileting.

When declawing is not an option, then people develop a different mindset e.g. dogs don't get declawed or have their teeth removed (nor should they) despite the fact that they can be even more destructive in the home (and I speak from the personal experience of purchasing an apartment with woodwork and plasterwork extensively damaged by a dog raking at it in frustration) and 1000 citizens a day in the USA receive hospital treatment for dog bites.

The continuance of the practice of declawing cats for convenience in the USA and Canada shames both countries when the it is either banned - even carrying a prison sentence in some countries e.g. Israel - or simply not practiced in the rest of the world. Please close the loopholes in your Bill that would allow this barbaric mutilation (and devocalising dogs -also illegal here) to continue

Yours sincerely,

Shirley J. Swaine,