

Al Cutrona
State Senator
33rd Senate District
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215
614.466.8285



Hearcel F. Craig
State Senator
15th Senate District
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215
614.466.5131

October 7, 2025

**Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
SB 252 Sponsor Testimony**

Senator Cutrona:

Chair Schaffer, Vice-Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 252, alongside my joint-sponsor, Senator Craig.

Put simply, Senate Bill 252 prohibits the declawing of cats in Ohio, except in certain cases where the procedure is deemed medically necessary by a licensed veterinarian. This bill would require veterinarians, performing such procedures for therapeutic reasons (i.e. to treat illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal claw conditions), to file a written statement with the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board within 10 business days, including pathology reports, cat identification information, and owner contact details.

The practice of declawing cats is widely recognized as causing lasting pain, behavioral issues, and long-term health complications for cats. It should be noted that a cat's claw is not a fingernail. Declawing is a surgical procedure that involves the amputation of the last bone of each of a cat's toes, which is equivalent to a human having the last knuckle of each finger removed.

By passing this legislation, we can prevent unnecessary suffering, promote the humane treatment of our animals, and encourage responsible pet ownership across this great state. We thank you for your thoughtful consideration, and potential support – I will now turn it over to my joint-sponsor, Senator Craig, to offer additional insight.

Senator Craig:

Chair Schaffer, Vice-Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 252.

This legislation prohibits the elective declawing of cats, except when it is medically necessary to treat illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal claw conditions. Declawing is not a simple nail trim, it is the amputation of the third bone in each toe. This non-essential procedure can cause chronic pain, arthritis, nerve damage, and lasting behavioral problems such as biting, inappropriate urination, and overgrooming.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend declawing to prevent disease. Major veterinary organizations, including the American Animal Hospital Association, the Paw Project, and the American Veterinary Medical Association, oppose the practice unless medically necessary. Public opinion increasingly views it as inhumane.

Other states, such as New York, Maryland, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Virginia, have already enacted bans. Even data from the Canadian province of British Columbia also shows no increase in shelter surrenders or euthanasia; in fact, in some cases, surrenders actually declined.

Senate Bill 252 also includes meaningful enforcement provisions. It establishes civil penalties for violations, beginning at \$1,000 for a first offense and up to \$2,500 for repeat offenses. This structure ensures accountability while giving veterinarians clarity about what is permissible under the law.

Importantly, this legislation strikes a balance. It protects cats from unnecessary harm while preserving a veterinarian's professional judgment in cases where the procedure is truly required. SB 252 explicitly allows safe and humane alternatives, such as claw trimming and the use of nonpermanent nail caps.

This bill is about compassion, responsibility, and aligning Ohio with best practices already in place across the country. We want cat owners to understand that declawing is not a harmless convenience, but rather a procedure that carries serious medical and behavioral risks. By passing this legislation, we can protect the wellbeing of cats, support the veterinary profession, and ensure Ohioans have safe and humane alternatives available.

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, and I would be happy to answer any questions.