

2023 -- S 0403

LC001456

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY -- CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Introduced By: Senators Murray, Euer, Sosnowski, Valverde, Lauria, F. Lombardi,
Britto, DiMario, Kallman, and Paolino

Date Introduced: February 16, 2023

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 4-1 of the General Laws entitled "Cruelty to Animals" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **4-1-44. Declawing cats prohibited.**

4 (a) For purposes of this section:

5 (1) "Declawing" means an onychectomy or any other surgical procedure to amputate or
6 modify a portion of a cat's paw in order to remove the cat's claws. "Declawing" does not include
7 the trimming of nonviable claw husk or placing nonpermanent nail caps.

8 (2) "Tendonectomy" means a procedure in which the tendons to a cat's limbs, paws, or toes
9 are cut or modified in order that the normal functioning of the claws is impaired.

10 (3) "Therapeutic purpose" means a medically necessary procedure to address an existing
11 or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in the claws, nail bed, or toe
12 bone, that compromises the cat's health. "Therapeutic purpose" shall not include a procedure
13 performed for a cosmetic or aesthetic purpose or to make the cat more convenient to keep or handle.

14 (b) It is unlawful for any person to perform surgical claw removal, declawing, or a
15 tendonectomy on any cat or otherwise alter a cat's toes, claws, or paws to prevent or impair the
16 normal function of the cat's toes, claws, or paws.

17 (c) This section does not apply to a procedure performed solely for a therapeutic purpose.

18 (d) Any person found guilty of violating this section shall be fined not more than one
19 thousand dollars (\$1,000).

1 [\(e\) The prosecution of violations of this section shall be in accordance with § 4-1-20.](#)

2 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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- 1 This act would prohibit the declawing of cats by any surgical procedure to amputate or
- 2 modify a portion of a cat's paw in order to remove the cat's claws. This section would not apply to
- 3 any procedure performed for a therapeutic purpose.
- 4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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