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October 31, 2022

The Honorable Michael Hanlon
City of Allentown
Via email: Michael.hanlon@allentownpa.gov

Re: Ordinance on the declawing/de-knuckling of cats

Dear Clerk Hanlon and Honorable Council Members,

Please accept this letter as the testimony of Best Friends Animal Society in support the ordinance before this body to prohibit the declawing of cats. Best Friends is a leading national animal welfare organization dedicated to ending the euthanasia of healthy and treatable dogs and cats in America's shelters. In addition to running lifesaving programs in partnership with more than 2,800 animal welfare groups across the country, including in Pennsylvania, Best Friends works to advance regulations, policies and legislation that support communities' efforts to improve animal sheltering. Best Friends supports this ordinance for two reasons.

First, this ordinance is not likely to result in a deluge of surrendered cats because behavior is not a significant reason for owner surrender. Best Friends collected data on owner-surrendered cats from January 2018 through September 2020. Only five percent (5%) of cats were surrendered for non-aggressive personality issues and only one and a half percent (1.5%) of cats were surrendered due to aggression issues. The state-wide data indicates this ordinance is not likely to result in large numbers of cats being surrendered to shelters because the owners cannot elect to de-knuckle their pet.

Second, Best Friends is opposed to the practice of cat de-knuckling. Only in cases where it is deemed medically appropriate (such as tumors, infection or other chronic health issues determined by a licensed veterinarian) should the onychectomy procedure be considered. Cat owners who have concerns about scratching behavior should seek non-surgical management techniques to manage the undesirable behavior. Furthermore, Best Friends' Sanctuary has received cats as owner-surrenders after declawing because the pain caused the cat to become 'ornery.'

For the foregoing reasons, Best Friends Animal Society respectfully requests this body pass the ordinance to ban declawing. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Kelsey Gilmore-Futeral, Esq.
Legislative Attorney
Best Friends Animal Society
kfuteral@bestfriends.org