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## Health Care & Wellness Committee

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### HB 1904

**Brief Description:** Prohibiting the act of declawing cats.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Peterson, Leavitt, Parshley, Fosse and Macri.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the performance of a declawing procedure on a cat, except for therapeutic purposes.
- Establishes fines for the unlawful performance of a declawing procedure on a cat.
- Establishes recordkeeping and reporting requirements for veterinarians performing declawing procedures on cats.

**Hearing Date:** 1/14/26

**Staff:** Chris Blake (786-7392).

#### **Background:**

##### The Practice of Veterinary Medicine.

Any person practicing veterinary medicine in the state must be licensed by the Department of Health. The practice of veterinary medicine, surgery, and dentistry is, among other things, the diagnosis, prognosis, or treatment of diseases, defects, conditions, or injuries of animals, for hire, fee, or compensation. This may include administering drugs, performing operations, performing any manual procedure for the diagnosis of pregnancy, sterility, or infertility of livestock, or implanting any electronic device for the purpose of establishing or maintaining positive identification of animals.

Veterinarians must keep daily written records of the animals they treat, including separate

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records for each companion animal. The records must be readily retrievable and kept for three years from the last treatment or examination. The records must include identifying information related to the owner and the animal as well as sufficient information to justify the tentative diagnosis and to warrant the treatment, such as the animal's medical history, physical examination, treatment administered, medication information, and progress of the case. Veterinary medical records and images are the property of the veterinarian that orders them. Copies of the records must be made available to the owner within 10 days of a request by the owner.

### Declawing.

Feline onychectomy or "declawing" is a surgery that removes the first digital bone of a cat by laser, scalpel, or nail trimmer.

### **Summary of Bill:**

It is unlawful for a veterinarian to perform a declawing procedure on a cat unless it is necessary for therapeutic purposes. The term "declawing procedure" includes several types of procedures that: (1) remove a portion of the paw or digit of a cat in order to remove a claw; (2) cut or modify the tendon of the limb, paw, or digit of a cat in order to prohibit the normal movement of a claw; or (3) prevent the normal functioning of one or more claws of a cat. The term does not include nail filing, nail trimming, or the placement of temporary nail caps on a cat. The term "therapeutic purpose" includes actions that are matters of medical necessity related to a condition in the claw, nail bed, or toe bone that jeopardizes the animal's health. The term does not include procedures performed for cosmetic purposes or convenience in the keeping or handling of an animal.

A veterinarian who performs a declawing procedure on a cat must maintain records of the procedure for four years after the last contact with the cat. The records are subject to audit by the Veterinary Board of Governors (Board) and must include:

- the name and address of the cat's owner;
- the name and address of the person who paid for the procedure; and
- a description of the cat, including the cat's name, breed, date of birth, sex, color, markings, current weight, date and time of the procedure, reason for the procedure, and information to support the diagnosis.

Any person who performs a declawing procedure on a cat must report to the Board the number of procedures performed each year. The Board must retain the reports for four years. The reports may not be publicly disseminated and are not considered public records for the purpose of public archiving.

A person who performs a declawing procedure on a cat, other than for therapeutic purposes, is subject to fines of \$1,000 for the first offense, \$1,500 for the second offense, and \$2,500 for all subsequent offenses.

A veterinarian who violates any of the practice, recording, and reporting standards may be

subject to disciplinary action by the Board.

Local government ordinances regulating the performance of a declawing procedure on a cat are preempted.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 5, 2026.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.