

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 920

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 24, 2020

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 920.

This bill would prohibit a person from performing, or causing to be performed, an onychectomy (declawing) or flexor tendonectiony procedure by any means on a cat or other animal, unless the procedure is deemed necessary for a therapeutic purpose by a licensed veterinarian. Any person who violates this provision would be guilty of a disorderly persons offense, which is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, a term of imprisonment of up to six months, or both. A violator would also be subject to a civil penalty of between \$500 and \$2,000.

For purposes of the bill, the term “therapeutic purpose” means for purpose of necessity to address the medical condition of the animal, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in a claw that compromises the animal’s health. “Therapeutic purpose” would not include cosmetic or aesthetic reasons or reasons of convenience in keeping or handling the animal. Under the bill, whenever a licensed veterinarian determines that an onychectomy or flexor tendonectiony is necessary for a therapeutic purpose, the veterinarian would be required to file a written statement with the Department of Health, and provide a copy of that statement to the owner or keeper of the animal. A veterinarian who fails to comply with this provision would be subject to disciplinary action by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.