



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Testimony in Support of HB 2824  
House Committee on Human Services and Housing  
February 18, 2015  
By Scott Beckstead, Senior Oregon State Director,  
The Humane Society of the United States**

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and our Oregon supporters, I am here to voice our support for HB 2824.

This bill prohibits a landlord from requiring an applicant or tenant to declaw or devocalize animals otherwise allowed on the premises or to advertise in a manner that discourages application from a potential applicant with an otherwise allowed animal that has not been declawed or devocalized.

**HSUS policy on pets and housing.**

- Partnering with the housing industry to further a more humane economy through broader pets-welcome policies will significantly benefit landlords and renters alike.
- Committed to improving options for renters with pets and dramatically diminishing the number of families forced to choose between their pets and their homes.

**Facts on housing and pets.**

- 63% of American households include pets – not as accessories, luxuries, or disposable temporary additions, but as family members to whom they have made a lifetime commitment.
- 43 million Americans, fully 35% of American households, rely on rental housing; assuming just 1 pet per renting household, that's over 30 million pets currently living in rental housing across the nation, and demand for rental housing in the U.S. continues to increase.
- **6-8 million pets enter animal shelters each year, and one of the most frequently cited reasons for relinquishment is a housing/moving/landlord issue.**
- It costs nearly 2.5 billion dollars in taxpayer and charity dollars to house, care for, and try to re-home those animals, and nearly half of them will never find a new home.

**Declawing and debarking is inherently cruel.**

- The last digit on the cat's feet are amputated, leaving the animal crippled and without the means to defend itself.
- Debarking is an operation to sever or remove an animal's vocal cords or prevent the normal function of an animal's vocal cords. Devocalized dogs develop a host of behavioral problems stemming from their frustration with not being able to communicate.
- These procedures are most often performed for the convenience of the owner and not the well-being of the pet.

**Pet owners should have the right to make important medical decisions, not landlords.**

- Not only are these procedures inhumane, they are also very expensive. Most pet owners are very limited in rental options to begin with and adding on more restrictions increases the likelihood of having to get rid of the pets.
- Studies have proven that pet-owning tenants do not cause more damage or cost more to house than tenants who don't own pets. In fact, indications are that pets cause less property damage than children.<sup>1</sup>
- Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and Fair Housing Act recognize the value of the human-animal bond and include legal protections for renters with pets; however, those legal measures shouldn't be necessary to ensure that tenant/pet relationships are preserved.

Oregonians love their animals and making them choose between adequate housing and their pets is wrong. Many of the policies that exclude or limit access to housing for pets and their families are based on misinformation or myth, and can be revised to the benefit of both property owners and renters. For all of these reasons, The HSUS urges the committee to vote "yes" on HB 2824.

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<sup>1</sup> FIREPAW, Inc. published in Anthrozoos 2005, Companion Animal Renters and Pet-Friendly Housing in the U.S.