

Post Office Box 11364
1067 N.E. Columbia Boulevard
Portland, Oregon 97211



Phone: 503.285.7722
Fax: 503.285.0838
www.oregonhumane.org

Date: February 18th, 2015

To: House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair

From: Sharon Harmon
Executive Director, Oregon Humane Society

Re: House Bill 2824

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. **We are here today to ask for your support of HB 2824.**

Barking is a normal behavior for dogs; they bark to communicate. Excessive barking can be minimized by proper training, stimulation, companionship, and environmental modification. Scratching is a normal behavior for cats; they scratch to mark their territory, to stretch, and to maintain the health of their claws. Destructive scratching can be prevented by providing the cat with suitable scratching surfaces, claw trimming, synthetic claw caps, and behavior modification. Addressing these normal behaviors with the complicated and costly surgical procedure of debarking or declawing is done for the convenience of the owner and rarely for the health of the animal.

Debarking surgery involves removing the vocal cords, in whole or in part. Declawing surgery removes not only the claws but also bones and tissue from the tips of the digits. The human equivalent would be amputation of the tips of the fingers to the first knuckle. These surgeries involve significant pain and risk and are not always effective.ⁱ In many cases the dogs still bark, albeit in a raspy hoarse manner, because the cause of the barking hasn't been addressed.

The American Veterinary Medical Association states that debarking surgery "should only be performed by qualified, licensed veterinarians as a final alternative to euthanasia after behavioral modification to correct excessive vocalization has failed and after discussion of potential complications from the procedure with the owner."ⁱⁱ In addition, the AVMA states that "the decision to declaw a cat should be made by the owners in consultation with their veterinarian. Declawing of domestic cats should be considered only after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using its claws destructively or when it's clawing presents an above normal health risk for its owner(s)."ⁱⁱⁱ