

Dear Rep. Brent Barton,

Thank you for speaking with me regarding HB3494a. After reading the bill, further conversations and research, I will be unable to support this bill. I think it is well intentioned and a start for discussions, but it does not address the real problem. Cats and dogs are being irreparably harmed through the procedures of declawing and debarking. The exceptions that are available as options to pet owners and veterinarians are too open and too easily abused. It defeats the intentions of this bill. As a practicing veterinarian for the past 24 years, I can assure you that I have heard the majority of excuses and reasons why these convenience procedures need to be done. Unfortunately, I know of practitioners who will circumvent this bill due to the perceived right of owners and judgment of these veterinarians. It would be difficult to police, and I don't anticipate this bill to be effective. It is unfortunate that the veterinarian governing bodies (OVMA, AAHA, AAFP, AVMA) fail to uphold a major point of the Veterinarian's Oath ("I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering") in the face of a supposed economic hardship. I am even more disappointed with OVMA stating that they will fight the passage of a total ban, knowing that this bill will not stop these procedures.

Many practitioners will not spend the time speaking to owners to get complete histories, or to educate owners with alternatives to declawing, or debarking. We, as an industry, already acknowledge that we are not seeing cats in our practices with the same frequency as dogs. People present cats for destructive behaviors when they are already at the end of their patience. It is difficult to change their minds when they are at this stage. If a surgical option is still available, owners will still opt for the surgical option. If we as a profession, do not see these procedures as wrong, how are we going to convince owners if exceptions are still allowed? Are we going to present this with a wink and a nod? I feel that we should follow what 37 other countries have done, and allow no exceptions. All veterinarians know the consequences and adverse effects of both procedures. We are supposed to have informed consent from owners. I have direct experience of informed owners, not understanding the gravity of their decisions and having "buyers remorse", wishing they hadn't chosen the procedure. They feel bad, but it's too late for the animal who has to live with the adverse effects. People are allowed to litigate when surgical procedures go wrong, but animals have to live with the consequences responding with behavioral changes and fear responses. Many of my patients having been declawed prior to visiting me, present with litter box aversion, excessive grooming, aggression and are fearful during the visit. Past medical records will document that aggressive behavioral changes occur soon after spay/neuter/declaw procedures. There is scientific documentation that pain and fear will permanently cause changes in the brain. Dogs present with breathing issues secondary to debarking. We already have a similar disease called laryngeal paralysis which requires surgical intervention to repair. We induce similar problems with the debarking procedure. Working dogs end up unable to breath properly in a "debark stricture" and run a risk of respiratory collapse or arrest depending upon the extent of scar tissue formation.

Regarding the medical exception on this bill for immunocompromised individuals, this is not a valid statement and should be amended. Declawing does not make the animal safer for these

owners. Knowing their paws are ineffective, declawed cats are quicker to bite. I see this daily in my practice. The human medical profession acknowledges this and doesn't recommend declawing due to animals bites causing a greater health risk.

In conclusion, in good conscience, I must follow my moral and ethical obligation in practicing for the benefit of my patients. I have not performed a declaw in my practice for the past three years, and have not missed out on any potential income generated by the declaw procedure. I have refused to do debarking procedures in any of my past practice situations. Please take note there are no debarking procedures to be found on YouTube. They are a bloody, disturbing procedure with potentially grave consequences if things go wrong. Owners who allow this procedure have never seen what these animals go through. Please amend or rewrite this bill for no exceptions. You have a chance, if you stand your ground, to improvement the situation for these animals. The country is prime for a State to step up and show compassion. Oregon is one of the more animal friendly states and the animals need this protection. Maybe we can remind the governing veterinarians where their true loyalties should lie.

Sincerely,

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