

May 25, 2015

Subject: HB 3494-A OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED - Senate Committee on Human Services & Early Childhood

Esteemed Senate Committee Members,

I am writing to let you know that I, and my family, oppose HB 3494-A as it is currently written. I would, however, approve of it if careful amendments were made to remove all non-therapeutic exceptions. At this time, the bill is riddled with unacceptable loopholes hidden under the guise of 'protecting' dogs and cats when it in fact does just the opposite: allowing veterinarians to continue inflicting unnecessary harm upon these animals at their sole discretion. Let me elaborate on the flawed reasoning behind the current bill:

Declawing will NOT protect cats from being relinquished to shelters. Rather, there is evidence that the behavioral problems that follow declawing stem directly FROM the declawing. A cat will avoid the litter box and if its toes are too painful to tread in cat litter, and this naturally forces a cat to relieve itself in inappropriate places. If claws are removed, a cat is more likely to resort to using their next best defense—their teeth. Declawing CREATES negative behaviors; it does not stop them. A report published in the January 1, 2001 issue of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) by Yeon, et al., states that **33%** of cats suffer at least one behavioral problem after declaw or tendonectomy surgery. **That's one in every three declawed cats.**

Immune-compromised people are NOT more likely to contract illness from a cat with claws. Nearly all illnesses that might be spread from cats to humans (including toxoplasmosis, salmonellosis, intestinal parasites, and fungal dermatitis) are NOT considered communicable by scratching. The one disease that could be spread via scratching, Cat Scratch Disease, is only caused if infected flea feces comes in contact with a wound—cat scratch *or any other kind of wound*. Therefore, controlling FLEAS is the natural and recommended means to avoid this disease. Among many effective methods that the Cornell Feline Health Center recommends to prevent zoonotic disease transmission to humans, *declawing is not listed*.

Laser declawing does not remove the negative effects associated with declawing procedures. Laser surgery may reduce some pain and swelling immediately following the procedure, but the risk of behavioral problems and dangerous/long-term medical side-effects **remains the same**. All methods of declawing can still lead to biting and litterbox avoidance for the reasons outlined above. And all methods of declawing carry the same medical risks: future arthritis due to inhibited ability to walk naturally (also leads to future litterbox problems), ingrown claws, infection, and the pain that comes with these consequences.

There are simple, inexpensive alternatives to declawing that are noninvasive and temporary. Claw caps (like Soft Paws), the strategic placement of scratching posts and scratch-detering tape, or even the simple act of regularly trimming claws are far more effective methods to deter clawing than the surgical removal of the first bone in each toe, and these alternatives do not carry life-long negative effects on behavior or health. Veterinarians defend declawing because it is an easy “supersize me” option that generates big revenue. They are motivated by money, not the good of

the animals they inflict this procedure upon.

In 28 countries and multiple U.S. cities, declawing is recognized as an illegal act of animal cruelty. I desire for our great state of Oregon to be on the right side of history. It is my request, as a long-time Oregon citizen and informed cat owner, that this bill NOT be brought to vote before the committee unless amendments are made which remove all non-therapeutic exceptions.

Respectfully,

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