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Oregon State Senate
Senate Committee On Human Services and Early Childhood
HB 3494A

Hearing May 25, 2015
3:00 PM

Senators of the Committee:

In over 40 years of private veterinary practice I can assure you that I have saved the lives of countless dogs and cats by devocalizing or declawing them. This is the untold story that happens in heartfelt discussions in veterinary exam rooms on a regular basis. In my experience, these are not procedures that clients request out of convenience. They do it because they are deeply stressed, as are their pets. They are usually facing the choice of surrendering or euthanizing their pet or having one of these surgeries performed. They have problems with complaining neighbors, citations from animal control, landlord issues, have been injured repeatedly, have an elderly resident now in their home, or perhaps have endured significant financial damage. To add a legal restriction on resolving their problem is burdensome and unnecessary.

Veterinarians use modern perioperative analgesics, general anesthetics, and postoperative pain control for all surgical procedures now. We not only do it because it is good practice, but we are required to do this per the Oregon Veterinary Practice Act. It is redundant to enact a new regulation requiring this. Further, while I realize that declawing is a controversial procedure, it is **not** inhumane! The reason we require 48 hours of post-operative hospitalization at our clinic is to help protect the patient from injuring themselves because they feel so good! Post-operative pain control is so effective that we have to remove treatment clipboards from the front of the kennels to keep patients from batting at them as soon as 6 hours after their surgeries. We frequently need to tranquilize them for a day to keep them from being too active. To think that veterinarians can repair ruptured ACLs, plate fractured long bones and perform open chest surgeries and achieve excellent post-operative pain control but we can't do that for a declaw is ludicrous and illogical! There is no question that any surgery, if done incorrectly, can result in

lameness and pain, but to believe that is the norm is simply untrue. Untoward results after declaw surgery is no more common than with any other routine surgery.

We also hospitalize patients that have been devocalized, not because they are painful, but to keep them sedated so they don't try to bark! I have never had a client request a debark procedure due to convenience and have coached several on training procedures so they could avoid surgery. I am convinced that I saved most of my patients from euthanasia. My clients were able to continue to enjoy the companionship of their pets.

The amendment to this bill seems to be an attempt to disallow declawing as a means to protect an owner's personal property. It is not reasonable to allow domesticated animals to constantly destroy either humans or their property. This is one of the basic tenants of domestication. It is unreasonable to deny cat ownership to someone simply because they want nice furnishings in their home. Studies have repeatedly shown that declawed cats continue to show normal scratching/marking behaviors, play, hunt, are well-adjusted socially, and can enjoy reclining on well-appointed furniture just as they did before their surgeries!

The decision to have one of these surgeries performed is a difficult emotional one already. There are a myriad of concerns that are specific to each situation. Frequently it involves a choice of surgery or euthanasia. Veterinarians are well-equipped to handle these discussions and they do an exemplary job of it now. They perform the surgery humanely and are highly trained and regulated. Pet owners that request these procedures are well-informed or soon become educated because of their interaction with trained veterinary staff. There is simply no need for further governmental regulation where there is no problem. Further, it adds yet another layer of bureaucracy to an already well-regulated profession that is under continued economic strain due to the runaway inflation in medical equipment and supplies.

Please vote NO on this unnecessary legislation.

Sincerely,

Robert Bullard DVM