

The Paw Project

Advocates for Animals • A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

May 24, 2015

Honorable Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services & Early Childhood

RE: HB 3494-A OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED
Meeting date: May 26

Dear Senator Gelser,

I am the Director of the Paw Project, the world's largest organization devoted solely to ending declawing. We have an members in Oregon and an Oregon chapter. We are in opposition to HB 3494-A.

The bill's exemptions that allow declawing and devocalization constitute such big loopholes that they will swallow the rule. These procedures, declawing and devocalization, will be allowed at the discretion of the veterinarian without any effective means of enforcement. In the successful legislation we have sponsored in the past, we have not accepted these types of exemptions. We encourage you to not accept them either.

The first exemption allows for a vet to declaw a cat if the owners claim they cannot stop the scratching behavior. There are proven humane and effective means of controlling this problem. We also believe that there is compelling evidence that declawed cats are actually more likely to lose their homes because they were declawed. It is widely reported that declawed cats avoid using their litter boxes. Declawed cats are also known to bite more often. The Oregon Humane Society states on their website that "scratching is a natural behavior for cats and can be directed to appropriate items. Declawing can also lead to litter box or aggression problems." Litter box avoidance and biting are reported to be much more common reasons for relinquishment of animals to shelters than is unwanted scratching. Please do not believe that declawing will have the net effect of keeping cats in their homes.

Declawing is not effective to protect human health and may, in fact, be counterproductive. Authorities in human health, including the CDC, NIH, US Public Health Services, and the Infectious Diseases Society of America state that "declawing is not advised" to prevent transmission of disease to at-risk persons. Since animal bites are recognized to be much more dangerous than scratches, a cat who is more likely to bite as the result of declawing poses a greater risk to human health than one with claws.

Please also note that many animal protection organizations, including the Humane Society of the United States oppose declawing when done solely for the convenience of the owner.

This bill would codify and legitimize unscientific and speculative reasons for declawing and devocalization. We don't believe that this bill is a first step to help animals. We do feel that it would be, unless amended to remove the loopholes, the first step to wider public acceptance of two inhumane convenience surgeries that the citizens and veterinarians in much of the rest of the world find unacceptable. For these reasons, we respectfully request you oppose HB-3494-A in its current, unamended form.

Sincerely yours,



Jennifer Conrad, DVM