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Testimony of Brian Posewitz on Behalf of Humane Oregon
House Bill 3494 – Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood

May 26, 2015

Chair Gelser and members of the Committee:

My name is Brian Posewitz. I am here today representing Humane Oregon. Humane Oregon was formed last year to help promote humane treatment of animals through participation in Oregon's political process and elections.

Humane Oregon opposes House Bill 3494 in its current form. However, Humane Oregon would support the bill with adoption of the A5 amendments.

We agree that devocalizing and declawing of animals are inhumane procedures. They deprive the animals of a basic part of their identities and may lead to other physical and behavioral problems. We believe they should be used only out of medical necessity for the animal.

The exceptions in the A-Engrossed version of the bill are too broad. The bill would allow devocalization upon a showing only that "behavioral modification to correct excessive vocalization has failed" and would allow declawing upon a showing only that "[a]ttempts to prevent the animal from destructively using its claws have failed." These terms are undefined and could mean something as minimal as telling the animal a few times to stop barking or stop scratching.

We understand the argument that even a weak bill is better than no bill. However, we agree with those who say that the bill in its current form amounts to an implied statement that devocalizing and declawing are acceptable ways to keep a dog from barking or to keep a cat from scratching the furniture. We do not think the Oregon Legislature should make that statement.

The A5 amendments would make the bill a good bill by allowing devocalization and declawing only when medically necessary for the animal. We therefore urge you to adopt the A5 amendments and pass the bill in that form.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.