

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Elizabeth Emerson and I am providing written testimony in opposition of HB 3494-A, for the hearing on June 2nd, 2015 at 3 PM in the Oregon Senate, Salem, OR.

I ask that HB 3494-A be withdrawn and not brought to vote. The bill contains unacceptable loopholes and will not protect dogs and cats. It would allow declawing and devocalization to continue unchecked in Oregon at the sole discretion of veterinarians, and that is not okay.

Please do not let this bill be brought to a vote unless there is an amendment to remove ALL non-therapeutic exceptions. Declawing and devocalizing should be an absolute rarity and exception for physical health issues, such as cancer, not something that is done for convenience or because owners don't want to properly care for their pets.

Too many vets will do whatever their clients ask them to, regardless of how that affects dogs and cats. I have seen people who have never owned a cat before take them to the vet to declaw them so that their furniture stays intact—they don't even try to buy them appropriate cat scratchers. And vets go along with it because it brings in money. There need to be protections for animals from these occurrences, not a codification of the current shameful status quo.

This bill is not a step forward for animals. Rather, it is a step backwards in the movement to protect animals from unnecessary harm and Oregon is better than that. I am proud to be an Oregonian, but am horrified that my state might bring to vote a law that could actively promote the harm of animals. We are better than that and should be striving to be more in align with anti-declaw bill introduced in New York.

I am not writing as someone who is passingly concerned about this matter. I am writing as a professional pet sitter, owner of four rescue cats, and a regular volunteer and medicator with a Portland, Oregon non-profit, no-kill cat shelter. I have years of experience caring for cats and can tell you first hand that "behavioral" issues are not a legitimate reason to declaw a cat, and HB 3494-A would allow for behavioral-based declawing.

I have multiple clients with declawed cats. Not only are these cats' paws deformed, they all bite. When you take away a cat's natural defense, they will turn to the next best thing—their teeth, which is more dangerous than a mere cat scratch. Behavior actually gets worse! And these are not vicious or mean cats. These are regular cats, who, if annoyed or scared, instead of a soft pat with their paws, will all out bite. It is painful as their temporary caregiver to see cats like this. It hurts me to see them unable to properly play with toys because they no longer have the claws they need to do so. It's not natural and not their fault. We humans are the only ones who can stand up and protect them.

I ask you, please do not allow HB 3494-A to go to vote. This bill would legitimize acts of cruelty toward cats and dogs. Please do your research into devocalization and declawing and the devastating and painful consequences these unnecessary procedures have.

Please withdraw this HB 3494-A. Oregon is better than this.

I hope you have taken my testimony into consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Emerson  
Resident of SW Portland, OR (97219)