



Use Your Voice to Protect TheirsSM

United Against Devocalization

A campaign of Coalition to Protect and Rescue Pets

June 1, 2015

RE: Opposition to HB3494A As Written

Dear Senators,

Though we believe HB3494A is well-intentioned, it is bad legislation, worse than having no law—as written, it opens the door to increased animal cruelty.

Devocalization (trivialized as “bark softening,” “voice reduction”) of dogs and cats is not now as prevalent as other convenience surgeries. But if HB3494A passes in its current form, it would codify vocal cord surgery as an acceptable behavior intervention and be a first step toward mainstreaming this act of cruelty.

Ideally, we would want the legislature to close the loopholes (explained, among others, on pages 3-4 of the attached Position Paper) and enact a **good** law as Maryland did in 2014. Maryland’s solid humane legislation disallows vocal cord surgery on dogs and cats with a sole exception, the only ethical one. That is to treat a **physical** ailment.

http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2015RS/Statute_Web/gcr/10-625.pdf

Barring removal of loopholes, we would prefer that HB3494A die.

Devocalization exposes animals to lifelong misery—and a high risk of horrific premature death—regardless of the vet’s experience, the surgical route or the instrument used, including laser. Cutting even a little soft tissue produces scars. And scars can be deadly or cause anguish when they form in the throat.

We’ve known dogs *and* cats who, as a consequence of devocalization:

- Died in terror, gasping for air while choking on food
- Inhaled food, water, vomit into their lungs
- Suffered relentless coughing fits, some fainting as a result
- Endured painful, chronic throat inflammation

Nearly all these animals were relinquished *after* their vocal cords were clipped. Some were euthanized when owners couldn’t or wouldn’t pay for costly reparative surgery to remove scar tissue from their animals’ airways.

We invite you to read what veterinarians and animal rescue professionals say in the attached Expert Perspectives, and to hear what devocalized animals sound like by watching our short, non-graphic videos: www.stopdevocalizing.weebly.com/videos

If HB3494A passes as written, or with other loopholes added, the resultant law will tarnish Oregon’s proud reputation as a humane state—and cause even **more** dogs and cats than now to suffer and die. Just because owners didn’t want to hear the voices they were born with, and vets complied.

Please don’t let that happen.

Respectfully,

Beth Birnbaum for United Against Devocalization, cprpets@aol.com

ATTACHED:

Position Paper on Canine/Feline Devocalization
Expert Perspectives on Devocalization