

June 1, 2015

Re: Opposition to HB 3494A – meeting date June 2nd, 2015

Maria Hernandez, Committee Assistant
maria.i.hernandez@state.or.us.

Dear Miss Hernandez:

I am writing to indicate my **strong opposition to HB 3494-A**, the bill that is claimed to “prohibit declawing or devocalizing of animal unless procedure is performed by a licensed veterinarian under certain conditions”, sponsored by Representative Barton. I believe this bill, contrary to its title, in effect legitimizes the declawing and devocalizing of cats and dogs through a relatively obvious loophole contained in the “unless” portion of the bill.

I am a physician by trade, and in medical school we are taught that the first rule of practicing medicine is “do no harm”. I firmly believe that this philosophy should define not only the relationship between doctors and their patients, but also between animals and their vets. Declawing, also known as onychectomy, is the amputation of all or most of the last bone of each of the toes of the animal’s feet. The American Veterinary Medical Association lists “anesthetic complications (including death), hemorrhage, infection and pain” as potential complications of declawing. Chronic pain syndromes, permanent lameness, and behavior changes have been described in the veterinary scientific literature as complications of declawing. Quite simply, inducing this level of potential physical and psychological pain in an animal should not be practiced when there are safe and effective means to manage undesirable scratching behaviors through simple training and other established methods, such as purchasing a scratching post.

Declawing is unnecessary and inhumane. It is banned in eight US cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco. In many countries, including the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden, declawing is illegal, or is considered unethical by established professional veterinary organizations. The “unless” loophole contained within this bill gives far too much leeway to veterinarians to choose to perform this procedure, and as such the bill should be significantly amended if it is to be passed.

For these reasons, I oppose HB 3494-A.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Butler, MD