

June 2, 2015

Good afternoon, Chair Gelser and members of the committee.

My name is Laura Cochrane, and I'm a resident of Portland. I'm also a veterinarian, and I serve as the Oregon director of The Paw Project.

As I did last week, I'm here today to urge you to **oppose** HB 3494A. The general consensus, as you heard during the last meeting, is that declawing and devocalization are barbaric procedures. They are inhumane. Yet, here we are listening the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association fight for their members' rights to do them as they see fit. Why are they fighting so hard if their own president says that Oregon vets "rarely" declaw cats? On the OVMA website, why are declawing and debarking listed as two of the search parameters used by the public to find a clinic?

There is a reason that these procedures are illegal in so many countries. They don't serve to heal the animal. They don't serve to cure the animal. They are of NO BENEFIT to the animal. It doesn't matter if the most gifted veterinary surgeon in the most state-of-the-art hospital does the surgery and uses the most advanced pain control. The procedure is the same, and that animal is forever changed, all because the owner (with guidance from the veterinarian) has elected to do a convenience surgery to deal with a normal behavior. A normal behavior that can successfully be modified if one takes the time to properly address it.

And regarding the argument heard last week that clients won't drive across the state to see a veterinary behaviorist--veterinary behaviorists offer phone consultations and even Skype and other video consultations, allowing their services to be accessed pretty much everywhere.

The current exceptions for "last resort" and "protection of human health" are not based in fact. Declawed cats end up in shelters. In fact, a study out of Cornell that was published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association said that 1 in 3 cat owners reported at least one behavior change after their cat was declawed. The veterinarians who claim that declawing "keeps cats in homes" aren't seeing these cats with biting issues or litter box aversion who are relinquished to the shelters.

And I'll repeat something from last week. The human health experts, including the CDC, NIH, Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the US Public Health Service have published statements saying that declawing cats is NOT recommended to prevent transmission of disease from cats to people. So, those of you representing or siding with the OVMA, isn't it time to give your "protection of human health" argument a rest? Do you really feel comfortable going against the recommendations of these organizations?

The current exceptions are not enforceable. There will be no way to regulate whether or not a vet has "tried everything". What was done? How many attempts have been made? The sad truth is that there will always be people and veterinarians who fabricate "special


circumstances" to satisfy these exceptions. We've heard from a vet who approaches cases with the attitude that it will take 3 people to hold down a cat for a nail trim. That Soft Paws come off, so why bother? (nobody every said they were permanent!) By the way, I can trim pretty much any cat's nails by myself, so feel free to contact me for suggestions.

I hope that you understand that whether it's 2 years or 10 years or 50 years, the OVMA will **never** consider a complete ban on declawing or devocalization. The bill's authors, as well as OVMA and Oregon Humane Society, falsely believe that this bill is a step in the right direction. I can't stress enough that this isn't the case. If passed, this law would say nothing more than veterinarians can do these procedures if they really, really want to.

As with the laws passed in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and six other California cities, as well as the bill being considered in the state of New York, the only acceptable law that would be effective in Oregon is one that completely bans declawing and devocalization, except in the rare instance to correct a physical problem in the animal. Incrementalism doesn't make sense here. It makes you sound good to say that you've passed a law that limits these surgeries, and that you'll work on a complete ban in two years. But in reality, you're saying that even though these procedures are barbaric, you're okay letting hundreds if not thousands of cats and dogs in our state continue to have these done.

I ask that you reject HB 3494A in its current unamended form and either withdraw it or amend it to remove all non-therapeutic exceptions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Cochrane DVM". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct "DVM" at the end.

Laura Cochrane DVM
Portland, OR
Director, The Paw Project-Oregon