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POSITION PAPER



OPPOSE HB 1533 ANIMALS-BAN DECLAWING CATS

THE ISSUE

It's clearly understood that pet owners and licensed, medically trained veterinarians care passionately about the well-being of indoor and outdoor domestic cats. However, some activist groups and legislators are seeking to remove veterinary discretion surrounding the cat declawing surgical procedures that at times may be necessary to ensure a cat can thrive in an established, loving home. ISVMA believes this unrelenting mandate will result in cats being needlessly put up for adoption, abandoned or, in a worst-case scenario, euthanized.

THE PROBLEM

The Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association (ISVMA) is strongly opposed to HB 1533, which removes decisions about cat well-being from highly trained veterinarians charged with their care. Veterinarians have taken an oath to protect the health and welfare of all animals, including cats. As currently written, HB 1533 restricts veterinarians' ability to uphold their medical oath and sound judgments in the best interest of each cat under their professional care.

ISVMA has asked the bill's sponsor, Rep. Barbara Hernandez (D-Aurora), to revise the language to better address our veterinarians' concerns, but she has refused. Without changes to the language allowing veterinary discretion for special circumstances, we believe cats who might otherwise continue to live in well-established, loving homes will be euthanized when no other viable options are found.

We are not advocating for routine use of feline onychectomy or declawing. Any suggestion that this is a common practice is untrue. Declawing for any reason other than health and well-being of the cat is discouraged by veterinary medical groups. Yet, when the procedure is recommended, veterinarians employ the utmost care while engaging in state-of-the-art procedures and employing the most effective pain management treatment.

The bill's current language is rigid, dismissing the importance of the pet-owner bond and veterinarians' abilities to exercise sound medical judgement in unique circumstances. This bill puts the very cats it seeks to protect at risk. We cannot support this bill as written.