



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
VETERINARY MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

6 March 2012

Senator Fran Pavley  
California State Capitol, Room 4035  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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**RE: Veterinary Support for SB 1229**

Dear Senator Pavley:

I am writing on behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA), a national organization of veterinary professionals with a focus on the health and welfare of animals. We want to thank you for introducing SB 1229, a bill that would prohibit landlords from advertising or establishing rental policies requiring that a tenant’s companion animals be declawed or devocalized as a condition of occupancy. HSVMA is co-sponsoring this legislation —along with The Paw Project—because we believe it would guarantee important protections for companion animals in California.

As veterinarians, we strongly agree with the central premise of this bill—that landlords should not dictate which medical procedures are performed on their tenants’ animals, particularly when these surgeries provide no medical benefit to the animals. SB 1229 will protect tenants from being forced to choose between securing housing for their families and subjecting their pets to unnecessary, costly and life-altering medical procedures.

Declawing is amputation surgery that is typically performed to prevent cats from causing scratching damage to furniture and other household items. Because of our concerns about the possible long-term physical and behavioral consequences of declawing to cats, HSVMA advocates the use of humane alternatives, such as scratching posts, nail trims, and nail caps, to address destructive scratching. Devocalization (often called ‘de-barking’), is another invasive surgery in which all or part of an animal’s vocal chords are cut and removed in order to muffle or silence them. Adverse physical consequences of devocalization can include chronic coughing and gagging, breathing difficulties, and exercise intolerance. Instead, we support the use of behavior modification and environmental enrichment to address unwanted pet vocalization.

SB 1229 is a common-sense measure that will ensure that important medical decisions about companion animals are not made in the context of rental agreements but rather in consultation with veterinary medical professionals and focused on the animals’ health and well-being.

Again, thank you for introducing this important animal welfare legislation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
HSVMA Advocacy/Policy Division