

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_:

My name is Dr. XX. I'm a veterinarian and a constituent who has been practicing medicine in Illinois for XX years. I'm asking you to vote "no" on HB1533 (amendment to Humane Care of Animals Act) and I want to share my reasons why.

I am a highly educated, trained, licensed and trusted medical professional in our community. I care deeply about the health, protection and well-being of animals. I've taken a medical oath and have a long career dedicated to animal health and welfare.

**I'm concerned that this bill will compromise my ability to uphold my medical oath and will needlessly put cats' lives at risk.**

I believe the bill's sponsors and supporters may be well-intentioned, but they don't see the number of unique cases that my colleagues and I see every year. The bill's language is rigid – noting only a few specific medical conditions for which a veterinarian would be authorized to perform a feline onychectomy.

Every cat is an individual, however, and their health and welfare considerations are unique. Supporters of banning declaw procedures suggest it is only done for convenience or cosmetic purposes. **They are mistaken and misguided.** To be clear, Illinois veterinarians rarely perform declaw surgery (feline onychectomy). This procedure is usually done only after other options, such as frequent nail trimming or nail caps, have been unsuccessful. Any suggestions that this is a common practice are untrue. Declawing for any reason other than health and well-being of the cat and its family members is discouraged.

There are health and well-being concerns that veterinarians may recommend this procedure that will not be protected if this bill passes.

For example, consider Linda and Daryl, who live in Bond County. Their 14-year-old cat Pennies has long had an affinity for playfully scratching Daryl's legs for attention ever since she was a kitten. He never minded it. That is until he got into a tractor accident that damaged his circulation. Pennies' playful pawing turned into festering wounds on Daryl that wouldn't heal for weeks. Daryl's health was being compromised and it was too late to teach an old cat new tricks – Pennies wouldn't stop the playful attention seeking behavior she had always done.

The family faced a dilemma and had few choices – force Pennies to live outside after a lifetime as an indoor cat where her well-being would be compromised, get her declawed or have her euthanized. They consulted their veterinarian, and all agreed declawing was the most humane choice. Today, all three are happily living together. Pennies' family firmly believes the best thing for their cat, Pennies, was remaining in her home with her loving owners.

There are many more patient stories like Pennies', but their stories and voices are rarely heard, and not fairly considered in this bill. I worry most about older adults and owners whose cats develop chronic illnesses and need daily medicine, or for owners with compromised immune

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systems. This bill does not recognize the various health reasons why declawing may be recommended.

While seemingly well-intentioned, this bill as written will jeopardize the health and well-being of some cats and their owners.

Please leave medical discretion and decisions to medical professionals. I respectfully ask you to vote “NO” on HB1533.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

Your constituent,

NAME

CLINIC, ADDRESS