

**Testimony of the Hawaii Board of Veterinary Medicine**

**Before the  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Monday, February 24, 2020  
12:15 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 016**

**On the following measure:  
S.B. 2512, S.D. 1, RELATING TO VETERINARY MEDICINE**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gregory Zambrano, and I am the Executive Officer of the Hawaii Board of Veterinary Medicine (Board). The Board supports this bill.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) prohibit an animal's owner, and the owner's employees, from performing any surgical procedure, including surgical birth, ear cropping, tail docking, or debarking, without being licensed as a veterinarian; (2) make it a class C felony to intentionally or knowingly perform any surgical procedure, including surgical birth, ear cropping, tail docking, or debarking, on a pet animal by any person who is not licensed as a veterinarian; and (3) specify that accepted veterinary practices and cropping or docking as customarily practiced shall not be considered cruelty to animals in the first degree if performed by a licensed veterinarian.

The Board believes this bill will effectuate the protection of animals. The performance of surgical procedures by individuals who have not received appropriate education and training as a veterinarian poses serious dangers and risks to the animal. In addition, performing these procedures without first obtaining a license by the Board constitutes unlicensed activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**Hawaiian Humane Society**  
People for animals. Animals for people.

2700 Waiialae Avenue Honolulu, Hawaii 96826  
808.356.2200 • [HawaiianHumane.org](http://HawaiianHumane.org)

Date: Feb. 21, 2020

To: Chair Sen. Karl Rhoads  
Vice Chair Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole  
and Members of the Committee on Judiciary

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Public Policy Advocate  
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of SB 2512, SD1: Relating to Veterinary Medicine  
Monday, Feb. 24, 2020, 12:15 p.m., Capitol Room 016

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Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Bill 2512, SD1, which prohibits the owner of an animal, and the owner's employees, from performing any surgical procedure, including but not limited to surgical birth, ear cropping, tail docking, and debarking on the animal without being licensed as a veterinarian. It further makes intentionally or knowingly performing any surgical procedure on a pet animal by any person not licensed as a veterinarian guilty of a class C felony. And it specifies that accepted veterinary practices and cropping or docking as customarily practiced, shall not be considered cruelty to animals in the first degree if performed by a licensed veterinarian.

The Hawaiian Humane Society opposes cosmetic surgery on animals, but while this bill does not take that step, it does protect animal welfare by requiring that these procedures are performed by a licensed veterinarian. This measure definitely represents progress.

Surgical birth certainly should never be performed by anyone but a licensed veterinarian. Hawaiian Humane recently sent a bulldog mix out for specialized surgery on an enormous hernia that our chief veterinarian strongly suspects was the result of a backyard cesarean section. See photos on the next page. This animal was lucky enough to survive the mutilation and get the care she needed, but causing this sort of injury to an animal is unconscionable.

We urge the committee to pass SB 2512, SD1. Mahalo for your consideration.

Here are the before and after pictures of the approximately 3-year-old bulldog mix that was brought into our care with a large ventral abdominal hernia, suspected to be secondary to a backyard C-section. She is a very sweet dog and was recently adopted into a new home. Note she also has very short cropped ears, which are also usually an indication of amateur surgery.



**LATE**

Testimony in OPPOSITION of SB 2512

February 23, 2020

Sen. Karl Rhoades, Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Pacific Pet Alliance is a Hawaii based non-profit that focuses on promoting animal welfare through education. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of SB 2512.

The Pacific Pet Alliance agrees with the intent of this bill, to protect animals, particularly dogs, from being harmed by surgical procedures being performed by non-veterinarians. We acknowledge testimony from respected members of the local veterinary organizations and animal welfare groups and we share many of the same thoughts on this matter. However, we also recognize it is **common practice** for breeders to perform simple procedures that are customarily done **without the use of anesthesia**, often done under the guidance of their veterinarian with whom they have a strong relationship with. These procedures include but are not limited to tail docking, dew claw removal, and non-anesthesia teeth scaling. **The Pacific Pet Alliance is requesting that all procedures that do not require anesthesia be excluded from this measure.**

Tail docking and dew claw removal are procedures that are done on puppies that are just several days old. At this age, the bone has not grown into the flap of skin that will become a tail or dew claw. The nervous system is not fully developed and there is little or no blood when the skin flap is removed. The window of opportunity to perform these procedures is very short. If done when the puppies are older and the bone has grown in, this procedure would no longer be considered a “docking” but instead an amputation which would require anesthesia. **This point is very important and more than just semantics.** There is a small window of opportunity to **dock** a tail, less than 2 weeks. After this period, this would be considered an **amputation** and would require the surgical skills of a veterinarian. The examples of post-surgical complications of the spinal cord that were cited in previous testimony were most likely caused by amputation (tail removal done after the bone and nerves have grown in) and not tail docking.

There are dog breeders who live in rural areas where veterinary care is located hours away. **To transport puppies who are just a few days old and unnecessarily exposing them to diseases in a veterinary clinic is too much of a risk.** Farmers and ranchers have been doing these procedures for generations and continue to do so on their livestock and dogs.

The Pacific Pet Alliance also finds that **not every veterinary practice in Hawaii will perform these procedures.** We have discussed this concern with a Hawaii resident who is currently attending the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Iowa. He states that **graduates of this veterinary college will receive minimal to no education on how to perform these procedures (tail docking, dew claw removal, ear cropping).** I personally have bred Miniature Schnauzers, a breed where tails are docked, dew claws removed, and ears are cropped. I have personally assisted veterinarians in surgery to ensure that these surgical procedures are done correctly and to breed standards. Due to specific breed standards, it is impossible for a veterinarian to know precisely how to correctly dock tails on 62 different breeds or do ear croppings on 20 different breeds.

There was an incident in Hanalei, Kauai that was brought to the attention of the Pacific Pet Alliance where a licensed veterinarian, used anesthesia on newborn puppies to remove dew claws. One of the

puppies died and due to his lack of knowledge on dew claw removal, the pups grew up with disfigured legs. **Should this bill pass and become law, can the local veterinary community meet the needs of local breeders and perform tail dockings and ear croppings if this is not routinely taught in veterinary school?**

The American Kennel currently recognizes **62 breeds with docked tails** and **20 breeds with cropped ears**. Breed standards are established and maintained by AKC parent clubs whose primary purpose is to protect the welfare of their breed and the function it was bred to perform.

The Pacific Pet Alliance also finds the language of the bill to be vague and fails to define which procedures to be “surgical”. How does one know if the law has been violated? Some of these **surgical procedures** do not require anesthesia or **surgical tools**?

**The Pacific Pet Alliance respectfully requests that this committee not pass this bill.** We would welcome the opportunity to be part of a larger discussion of this matter as we do recognize that there are parts of this bill that do have merit.

Lynn Muramaru  
Board Member  
Pacific Pet Alliance

**SB-2512-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2020 9:28:01 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2020 12:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
carole richelieu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**SB-2512-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/23/2020 6:43:01 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2020 12:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Andrea Quinn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

Please support SB2512. Medical procedures performed on pets by anyone other than a licensed veterinarian constitutes a slow form of torture.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

Andrea Quinn

Kihei, Maui

**LATE**

**SB-2512-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/24/2020 1:17:40 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2020 12:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

In emergencies things have to be done right away and they may not be able to wait for a licens Doctor and may have to use some who knows what to do but is not licensed and there should no charges against this person who is just helping out.

**LATE**

**SB-2512-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/24/2020 11:38:55 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2020 12:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Inga Gibson	Testifying for Animal Welfare Institute	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Honorable Chair Rhoads and Judiciary Committee Members:

**RE: Strong Support for SB2512: Relating to Veterinary Medicine**

The majority of states explicitly prohibit any person, who is not a licensed veterinarian, from performing certain procedures such as ear-cropping/cutting, tail-docking/cutting and sterilization, due to the tremendous amount of pain and suffering that the animal will endure. Non-veterinarians do not have the necessary access to pain medication, pre- and post-operative care and antibiotics to prevent infection. Sadly, "home" ear-cropping is common in Hawaii as demonstrated in the below pictures of dogs who were rescued, but subsequently died, due to infection and from other health issues that were not addressed.

In 2007, Hawaii passed its first felony animal cruelty law. If a person were to intentionally cut off a dogs toe or foot, it would without question be considered malicious cruelty. There is no reason that a person should be able to cut off a dogs ears' or tail, and face no penalty.

Please support this important measure to protect pets from unnecessary suffering. Further these procedures may still be performed by a licensed veterinarian, if needed.

Inga Gibson, On behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute

The Animal Welfare Institute ([www.awionline.org](http://www.awionline.org)) is a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1951 and dedicated to reducing animal suffering caused by people. AWI engages policymakers, scientists, industry, and the public to achieve better treatment of animals everywhere – in the laboratory, on the farm, in commerce, at home, and in the wild. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates and other important animal protection news.