

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2016

The Honorable Julián Castro
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
Robert C. Weaver Federal Building
451 Seventh Street, SW, Room 10,000
Mail Stop S
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Castro:

We are writing you today to urge you to prohibit public housing authorities (PHAs) from requiring declawing as a condition of residency for tenants with cats. Declawing is a cruel and unnecessary procedure and also an onerous responsibility for financially disadvantaged residents of PHAs. When declawing is mandated, tenants must choose between putting their pets through a painful mutilation or relinquishing them to a local shelter. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) expressly prohibit this unnecessary and inhumane requirement for tenants of any residence operated by a PHA and/or third party contractor.

Declawing cats is an inhumane procedure that involves the amputation of the last bone of each toe on a cat. If performed on a human being, it would be equivalent to cutting off each finger at the last knuckle. It is painful and traumatic for cats, and requires several days of hospitalization, and is rarely recommended by veterinarians except in cases of medical necessity such as cancer of the nailbed.

Many animal welfare groups oppose declawing. The procedure has been banned in 28 countries including Australia, Brazil, and much of Europe due to animal cruelty concerns. In the U.S., several cities have banned declawing, California prohibits landlords from imposing declawing as a requirement of residency, and we expect the New York State Assembly to pass a ban in 2016. This trend in public policy demonstrates how archaic declawing is, and suggests a serious lack of awareness – and impending legal violations – by PHAs still clinging to this outdated approach to managing pets on properties.

The private housing industry many years ago moved away from declawing as a component of their pet policies, recognizing that it oversteps the boundaries of housing operators, infringes the veterinarian-client relationship, and damages the human-animal bond. Moreover, private property owners have recognized that declawing is not necessary for the protection of residential property, since humane and effective solutions to problem scratching are widely available and accessible for pet owners.

When PHAs insist on declawing of resident cats it perpetuates an inhumane practice, puts an unnecessary financial burden on people of limited means, and in many cases creates a de facto ban on cat ownership, all for no legitimate property-protection purpose. HUD has already taken a stand against cruel and unnecessary pet rules for residents by prohibiting PHAs from requiring

dogs to be devocalized. We ask that you now strictly and emphatically prohibit PHAs from requiring the declawing of residents' cats. This could be accomplished by adding the highlighted phrase below to section 960.707(c) of HUD's current regulations (24 C.F.R. 960.707 (c)):

(c) *Restriction.* A PHA may not require pet owners to have any pet declawed or to have any pet's vocal chords removed.

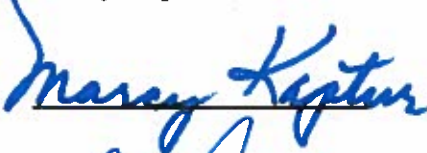
We further request that you notify all PHAs that, as a matter of HUD policy, they are not allowed to require declawing in public housing, and that you ensure enforcement of this policy.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing back from you soon.

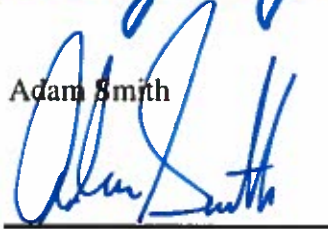
Sincerely,

Members of Congress:

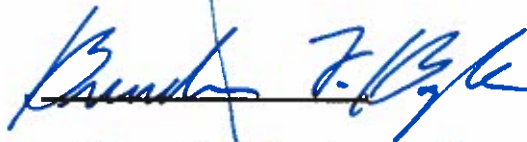
Marcy Kaptur



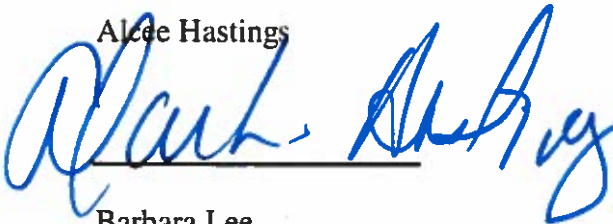
Adam Smith



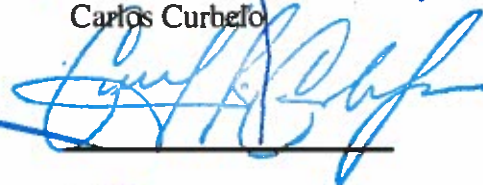
Brendan F. Boyle



Alcee Hastings



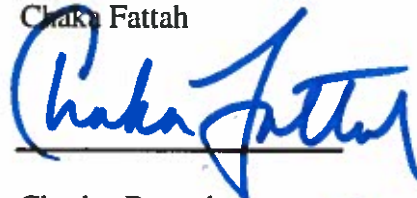
Carlos Curbelo



Barbara Lee



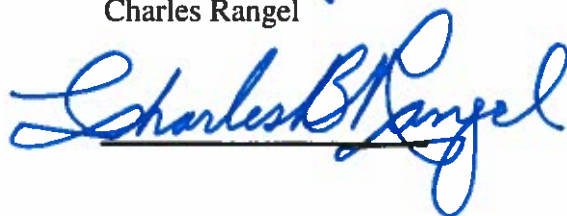
Chaka Fattah



Bonnie Watson Coleman



Charles Rangel



Chellie Pingree

Chellie Pingree

Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen

Daniel Donovan

Daniel M. Donovan, Sr.

David Cicilline

David Cicilline

Dina Titus

Dina Titus

Donna F. Edwards

Donna F. Edwards

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Frederica Wilson

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Hank Johnson

Hank Johnson

James McGovern

James McGovern

Jan Schakowsky

Jan Schakowsky

Jerry McNerney

Jerry McNerney

Jim Langevin

Jim Langevin

Jim McDermott

Jim McDermott

John Katko

John Katko

John Lewis

John Lewis

José E. Serrano

José E. Serrano

Judy Chu

Judy Chu

Katherine Clark

Katherine Clark

Keith Ellison

Keith Ellison

Linda Sanchez

Linda Sanchez

Lois Frankel

Lois Frankel

Lucille Roybal Allard

Lucille Roybal Allard

Luis Gutierrez

Luis Gutierrez

Madeleine Bordallo

Madeleine Bordallo

Mark Pocan

Mark Pocan

Martha McSally

Martha McSally

Niki Tsongas

Niki Tsongas

Raúl Grijalva

Raúl Grijalva

Richard Nolan

Richard Nolan

Robert Brady

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Sam Farr

Sam Farr

Scott Peters

Scott Peters

Shella Jackson Lee

Shella Jackson Lee

Steve Cohen

Steve Cohen

Steve Israel



Steve Israel

Suzanne Bonamici



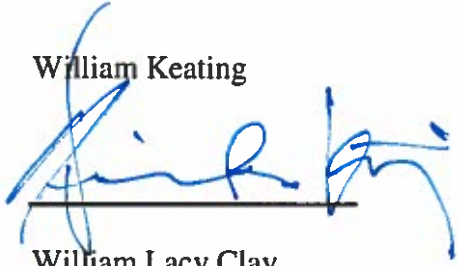
Suzanne Bonamici

Tony Cardenas



Tony Cardenas

William Keating



William Keating

William Lacy Clay



William Lacy Clay

Brenda Lawrence



Brenda Lawrence