



Meet Stella.



## She's just one reason to pass House Bill 344.

This gentle Lab is recovering from corrective surgery—scar tissue obstructed 50% of her airway after a breeder ordered her vocal cords cut. Why? Just to stifle her voice. Stella is lucky her adopters have the ability to pay for costly procedures that *may* give her a shot at a normal life. Otherwise, she'd land in a shelter. Or die. Devocalization is more common than you think. HB 344 would stop it.

**Angell Animal Medical Center refuses to devocalize.** It poses serious risks regardless of the vet's skill or experience, from chronic gagging to hemorrhage, massive infection and aspiration pneumonia. Tissue regrowth is common, subjecting the animal to repeated surgeries, and owners to costs they may be unable or unwilling to pay.

**Persistent barking is often a sign of distress.** Cutting vocal cords rather than addressing it begs the animal to express his discomfort in other inappropriate ways, like biting. Frequent barking also may be a learned behavior or hardwired. Neither justifies cutting vocal cords. There are many humane alternatives, starting with responsible pet selection, care and training, and domiciling breeding animals far enough from neighbors to not create a disturbance. Dogs bark more in a group!

**Devocalizing an animal puts people, especially children and frail elders, at risk.** A dog's warning bark that he's about to bite is different than his "play with me" bark. Devocalization removes nuances: These animals typically make muffled, indistinguishable sounds, and some have no voice. Even small dogs who can't bark audibly and unambiguously can be dangerous.

**Devocalized animals are abandoned like any other.** Pets with and without intact vocal cords are most often surrendered when an owner moves, loses a job, develops allergies or has a baby. Breeding and show dogs, devocalized or not, may be given up when no longer profitable.

**Groups with members who profit from devocalization insist it should be allowed** as a "last resort" for barking. That is obviously unenforceable! It is also baseless. Shelters say devocalization does *not* ensure owners won't abandon their animals. And barking does *not* force them to euthanize.

## Urge Your *State* Rep and Senator to Support An Act Prohibiting Devocalization, HB 344.

To find your legislators: 800-462-8683 or [www.wheredoivotema.com](http://www.wheredoivotema.com)

## Come to the Public Hearing at the State House on July 14.

Call up to two weeks prior to confirm the date: 617-722-1639.