To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in opposition to the breed-specific legislation currently under consideration by the <Legislative Body/Council or Committee> as a proposed strategy to prevent dog bites. Policies that target specific dog breeds for increased regulation or outright bans have proven ineffective in improving public safety. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is opposed to breed-specific legislation and instead advocates for specific strategies that have proven effectiveness in reducing the incidence of dog bites.

**While breed-specific laws may look good on the surface, they are an overly simplistic approach to a complex social problem.** There are several major problems with breed-specific legislation:

**Breed-specific laws can be difficult to enforce, especially when a dog’s breed can’t easily be determined or if it is of mixed breed.**
It is extremely difficult to determine a dog’s breed or breed mix simply by looking at it. Studies show that even people very familiar with dog breeds cannot reliably determine the primary breed of a mutt. Because of this, breed-specific legislation frequently focuses on dogs with a certain appearance or physical characteristics, instead of an actual breed, making the laws inherently vague and difficult to enforce.

**Breed-specific legislation is discriminatory against responsible owners and their dogs.**Breed bans assume all dogs of a specific breed are likely to bite, instead of acknowledging that most dogs are not a problem. Breed-specific laws can lead to the euthanasia of innocent dogs that fit a certain “look,” and to responsible pet owners being forced to move or give up dogs that have never bitten or threatened to bite. Furthermore, breed-specific ordinances may be in violation of a dog owner’s right to equal protection.

**Breed bans do not address the social issue of irresponsible pet ownership.** Any dog can bite, regardless of breed. Dogs are more likely to become aggressive when they are unsupervised, unneutered, and not socially conditioned to live closely with people or other dogs.Butbreed bans rarely assign appropriate responsibilities to dog owners. Breed-specific legislation deemphasizes the importance of responsible pet ownership, and diverts attention and resources away from proven solutions, such as socialization and training, and licensing and leash laws.

**It is not possible to calculate a bite rate for a breed or to compare rates between breeds because the data is often inconsistent or incomplete.**Statistics on injuries caused by dogs are often used to demonstrate the "dangerousness" of particular breeds. However such arguments are seriously flawed because: 1) the breed of a biting dog is often not known or is inaccurately reported; 2) the actual number of bites that occur in a community is not known, especially if they did not result in serious injury; 3) the number of dogs of a particular breed or combination of breeds in a community is not known because it is rare for all dogs in a community to be licensed; 4) statistics often do not consider multiple incidents caused by a single animal; and 5) breed popularity changes over time, making comparison of breed-specific bite rates unreliable.

Governmental policies aimed at reducing the incidence of dog bites need to look far beyond breed to identify effective solutions. **The AVMA recommends the following strategies:**

1. Enforcement of generic, non-breed-specific dangerous dog laws, with an emphasis on chronically irresponsible owners
2. Enforcement of animal control ordinances such as leash laws, by trained animal care and control officers
3. Prohibition of dog fighting
4. Encouraging neutering for dogs not intended for breeding
5. School-based and adult education programs that teach pet selection strategies, pet care and responsibility, and bite prevention

Please feel free to contact me if you’d like additional information about dog bite prevention or breed-specific legislation.

Sincerely,

<Name>

<Name of Your Clinic>

<Phone Number/Email>
<Address>