From:	Laura Marusinec
To:	District 1 Comments; Flynn, Kevin J. - CC Member District 2 Denver City Council; Torres, Jamie C. - CC Member District 3 Denver City Council; Black, Kendra A. - CC Member District 4 Denver City Council; City Council District 5; Kashmann, Paul J. - CC Member District 6 Denver City Council; Clark, Jolon M. - CC President Denver City Council; Herndon, Christopher J. - CC Member District 8 Denver City Coun; District 9; Hinds, Chris - CC Member District 10 Denver City Council; Gilmore, Stacie M. - CC Member District 11 Denver City Council; Deborah Ortega - Councilwoman At Large; dencc - City Council; Pazen, Paul M. - DPD SP1001 Chief of Police; Archer, Barbara A. - DPD SP1002 Deputy Chief
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] pit bull ban-from concerned Pediatrician
Date:	Friday, January 17, 2020 7:42:23 PM
Attachments:	study citations April 2019 with highlights.docx

Dear Representatives of Denver, CO,

First off, I thank-you for your time and consideration on this often heated and controversial matter.

I want you to know that my opinions on this are based on professional and personal experience, and my advocacy is completely voluntary. I am writing this on my own time, because I have become so passionate about this issue. I do not get paid for my time, unlike many pit bull lobbyists.

I am a **Pediatrician** currently practicing Pediatric Urgent Care in Wisconsin, and a member of the Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention of the American Academy of Pediatrics. And, I am an advocate for victims of vicious dog attacks. I also was fortunate to have practiced Pediatrics in the Denver area in the past and hope to do so again in the future. I would like to share a few reasons why removing or even loosening breed specific legislation would be a wrong move for Denver, CO.

I strongly oppose lifting breed specific restrictions/legislation on pit bulls and other dangerous dogs.

When I heard this was being suggested, I was disheartened. This would be a serious mistake, and would put so many of your residents at risk, including innocent children and pets. Pit bulls and other dangerous dogs have become an almost epidemic public safety issue over the last 10-20 years, and it is only getting worse**.** Pit bulls killed 33 of 48 people killed by dogs in 2019 in the US (69%). And it is estimated that they severely mauled approximately at least one thousand people, over 200 of those children, in one year alone. I have met many of them and their parents due to my advocacy. They would be happy to share their heartbreaking stories and photos of their brutal attacks with you if it would help prevent others from going through the same thing.

This is NOT the time to be relaxing legislation on pit bulls and other dangerous dogs. You have pledged to represent your citizens, not the specific concerns of a small but vocal minority. These regulations were put in place for a reason. There has been NO data or studies that have shown that things have changed for the better with these dogs and should be changed. In fact, as I noted above, things are only getting worse. The fatalities in the last few years continue to surpass prior years.

Your citizens voted to uphold the ban in 2016. Things have only gotten worse, especially in areas without breed specific legislation. Sadly, those who profit from these dogs don't care about your citizens or innocent people and pets.

In the last few years, dozens of children were brutally killed by pit bulls. And, hundreds of others have been seriously injured.

The most recent fatality was a 4 month old baby, killed by the family pit bull just over a week ago.

https://www.kansascity.com/news/nation-world/national/article239271333.html

While people discuss concerns of "discrimination" of a dog breed, this is far from the case. Discrimination is defined as "the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex". People don't choose things like race, age, sex, or disabilities, while they certainly do have the choice whether to bring a potentially dangerous dog into their home and our neighborhoods.

Delta Airlines recently banned pit bulls from their flights, even if they are ESAs or Service Animals due to injuries to workers from these dogs. And all US military bases ban pit bulls.

In the case of regulations based on dog breed, this is neither unjust, nor prejudicial treatment. That would be like saying a local government cannot regulate any animal that a person can have in their home. Are we ok with having tigers or bears as pets? Of course not, because they would pose a significant risk to persons or animals in the area. It is the same with pit bulls. We are looking at public safety as the priority, not a person's "right" to own any animal they want, vicious or not, dog or not.

All dog breeds were BRED for specific purposes. According to Merriam-Webster, a pit bull is:

"...pit bull terrier **:** a muscular, short-haired, stocky dog (such as an American pit bull terrier or American Staffordshire terrier) of any of several breeds or a hybrid with one or more of these breeds that was originally developed for fighting and is noted for strength, stamina, and tenacity**."**

Pit bulls were created over generations to be the most efficient fighters and killers. Pit bulls arewell- known for dog-on-dog aggression. They kill more other dogs and other domestic animals than ALL other breeds combined. While they weren't bred for human aggression, this was an unfortunate side effect of bringing a strong, muscular dog that was bred to fight into family homes and neighborhoods and calling them pets. Pit bulls now kill and maul more people, including innocent children, than all other breeds combined.

The claims that "it's all how they are raised", or "it's the owners, not the breed" are simply incorrect. The majority of pit bulls attacking are family dogs, just like every other dogs. The studies prove that as well. Ask those people who make those claims for their evidence. There is none. I have asked hundreds of people for their data to support their claim, without one piece of evidence. Meanwhile, at least every week there is another mauling of an innocent child from the family pit bull. It is not just coincidence that the common denominator to severe and fatal attacks is pit bulls.

And, one of the comments I hear a lot are that pit bulls are already in Denver. This just shows that pit bull owners disregard the laws. Do you really expect them to comply with legislation if you allow these dogs but enact special restrictions and responsibilities? Do you really want more people with this mindset in Denver? The answer to this comment would be to ENFORCE the current legislation.

I have done significant research in the medical studies regarding dog bites. There are at least a dozen peer-reviewed Pediatric studies in the last 10 years than conclude that pit bulls, and mixes of them, are the dogs that attack and severely injure or kill more children than any other dog breeds by far, and that attacks by pit bulls are more severe than those from other breeds and more often unprovoked. In fact, there are at least 6 new studies in the last 2 years that conclude the same. **Two studies from the Denver area, where pit bulls have been banned for 30 years, do not show nearly the number of pit bull injuries, though for one of the studies, a pit bull caused the most serious injury. (see references attached).**

The data also shows that most attacks on children are from their own family dogs, or dogs known to them (such as neighborhood dogs).

Highlights from several recent studies conclude:

- **"The data showed that compared with other dog breeds, pit bull terriers inflicted more complex wounds, were often unprovoked, and went off property to attack."**

November, 2019. Dog-Bite injuries to the Craniofacial Region: An Epidemiologic and Pattern-of-Injury Review at a Level 1 Trauma Center.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31816277

- **"Pet dogs were responsible for 42% of injuries, and pit bull was the most-identified breed (36.2%). Most injuries occurred while the child was at home (57.8%) and was petting or playing with the dog (28.4%)."**

October, 2018. Pediatric Dog Bite Injuries in Central Texas.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/30473254/

- **"Dog bite injuries remain a common form of pediatric trauma… Pit bull bites were implicated in half of all surgeries performed and over 2.5 times as likely to bite in multiple anatomic locations as compared to other breeds..."**

"Our data confirm what detractors of the breed and child advocates suggest -- that, with rare exceptions, children and pit bulls do not mix well."

2016. Characteristics of 1616 Consecutive Dog Bite Injuries at a Single Institution.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305270428_Characteristics_of_1616_Consecutive_Dog_Bite_Injuries_at_a_Single_Institution

I am currently communicating with Dr. Michael Golinko, lead author of two of the recent studies, along with other doctors, nurses, lawyers, and animal professionals. We are working directly with the American Academy of Pediatrics to address this urgent public health and safety issue. I have also spoken with dozens of parents of children who have been killed or seriously injured, often permanently disfigured, by pit bulls. Their stories are tragic and powerful and should NOT be discounted. Why should certain dogs' lives or the "right" of people to own dogs that have a long and current history of death and maulings matter more than the lives of children and other innocent people and pets?

Many other physicians are speaking out about their professional experience with dog-bite injuries, and also conclude that pit bulls cause the most severe injuries:

DAVID A. BILLMIRE, MD, professor and director of the Division of Craniofacial and Pediatric Plastic Surgery at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

"As one who, for the last 30 years, has been on the receiving end of the dog-bite injuries that pass through the Children's Hospital Emergency Room, as well as on the staff at the Shriners Hospitals for Children where we see the late effects of these injuries from across the nation, ***I can categorically tell you that the problems associated with dog bites are indeed breed-specific."***

"Starting about 25 years ago, my colleagues and I started to see disturbingly different types of injuries. Instead of a warning bite, we saw wounds where the flesh was torn from the victim. There were multiple bite wounds covering many different anatomical sites. The attacks were generally unprovoked, persistent and often involved more than one dog. In every instance the dog involved was a pit bull or a pit bull mix."

"Based on my extensive experience I believe that the risk posed by pit bulls is equivalent to placing a loaded gun with the safety off on the coffee table. I know this is an unpopular stand in some circles, but how many mauled children do we have to see before we realize the folly of allowing these dogs to exist?"

"There are plenty of breeds available that peacefully coexist with human society. There is no need for pit bulls."

www.cincinnati.com/story/opinion/contributors/2014/06/29/doctor-says-ban-pit-bulls/11709481

DR. BENJAMIN VAN RAALTE, MD, plastic Surgeon, Davenport, IA

"It wasn't until the pit bulls (became popular) that I started seeing the really vicious attacks," the Bettendorf plastic surgeon said *Monday. "The worst pit bull mauling I ever saw was an incident in which a dog bit off the entire cheek of a 5-year-old boy."* ***Of the severe bites he has treated, Van Raalte estimates, more than half have been the result of a pit bull attack****. The high number of serious injuries, along with the appalling and increasingly popular "sport" of dog fighting have convinced him the time has come for an all-out ban on pit bull breeding. "I'm just saying it's time to stop breeding them," he said. "Yes, there are lots of lovable pit bulls. I'm not advocating putting down pit bulls.* ***They're primarily bred for fighting. In 2016, we need to say we're done breeding pit bulls. Its primary purpose is to be a weapon. It's doing what it's supposed to do."***

http://bit.ly/1TtJ7c5

SETH BARUFFI, MD, South Jersey Healthcare

"As ***an ER doc*** *who doesn't predict what dogs would *never* bite, and, instead, just treats who walks in the door,* ***I can say that pit bulls account for the overwhelming majority of serious bites.*** *Little happy dogs probably bite more often, but they are minor and require little to no treatment (most probably just stay home).* ***What pit bulls can do is awful. The argument of nature vs. nurture is a fun academic discussion, but it is zero help to the little girl with a disfigured face or the parents of a dead kid. There is no reason to own an animal that can kill you if you are not the dog whisperer. There is not (sic) reason to own an animal that can kill you at all. The ban is a wonderful idea. It hurts no one and it saves kids lives."***

While a pit bull ban does not prevent all dog bites or attacks, it can at least help prevent the most horrific ones. BSL is only one part of effective dangerous dog legislation, but it is one of the most important ways to reduce serious and fatal dog attacks. Much of the other legislation is only helpful after an attack, or relies on owners to follow the rules (which pit bull owners in Denver clearly show they cannot).

Again, I thank-you for your time and consideration on this urgent public health and safety matter. I hope you take your citizens' rights to live in a safe community as more important than the small number of people who think they should have the right to own vicious and dangerous dogs, or people and organizations that profit from selling and "rescuing" them.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you and/or provide even more data and research on this subject.

I have significant professional and personal experience in this matter, and I have pledged in my career to do what I can to protect children and help them live safe and healthy lives. **No child should be killed or mauled walking on their street or playing in their home or yard because someone chose to bring an unsafe and unpredictable dog into their neighborhood.**

I can be contacted at this email.

Thank-you again for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Laura E Marusinec MD, FAAP

Urgent Care Pediatrician

Member AAP Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention