

**From:** [Cayetana Tabullo](#)  
**To:** [HEE Exhibits](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony to the Oregon House Committee on Energy and Environment to Reject House Bill 4049  
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## Testimony to the Oregon House Committee on Energy and Environment to Reject House Bill 4049, the subsidy bill for Covanta Marion waste incineration

I am an Oregonian residing in Salem. I urge you to reject House Bill 4049, which would award renewable energy credit eligibility to the Covanta Marion waste incinerator, which happens to be the only waste incinerator in the state. This facility has been operating in Brooks, Oregon, incinerating waste since 1987, without consultation of the surrounding community nor an opportunity to discuss the adverse health impacts, which are many and well-known, in regard to persistent toxic pollutants present in such an operation. Instead of requesting these renewable energy credits, which Covanta has never had in the over 30 years of its existence and which it does not need to operate at present, Covanta should be concentrating on the obvious necessity to address its significant deferred maintenance issues.

The Covanta incinerator is located just up the road from where I reside. As a person of color living in the northeast section of Salem, I have to contend daily with the terrible air quality that results from this garbage burner. My daily life is impacted by the toxic emissions from this aging incinerator. I often wear a mask when I am outdoors at my home due to the burning sensation in my nose and throat as I breathe. I rarely sit outside on my deck, or open my windows, because the prevailing air currents make it impossible to enjoy any semblance of clean air at my home because of the extremely unpleasant ambient air quality that originates from this monstrosity. I now have chronic congestion, an impaired sense of smell and respiratory issues that I did not have when I first came to Oregon. If I would have known that this plant was down the road when I purchased my home in Salem, Oregon, I would have gone elsewhere to enjoy a healthier environment with improved air, soil and water quality, in addition to enhanced peace of mind.

Northeast Salem is predominantly low-income and my community has a higher percentage of communities of color than in other areas of Marion County. We are not only a frontline community that experiences a higher impact from the daily toxic emissions from this facility, we also have less disposable income to hold our lawmakers accountable to consulting the community instead of continuing to favor this multinational corporation with a troubling history of polluting around the world. I would like to know exactly the quantity of these toxic chemicals I am ingesting every day of the year from this old garbage burner.

In this area, we have no continuous monitoring of toxins that this facility generates constantly, such as dioxins, the most toxic chemicals known to mankind. In addition to the assaults on our air and water perpetrated by this incinerator, we also are a captive population to the arsenic,

nickel, PCB's, hydrogen fluoride, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, lead, cadmium, mercury, dioxins, furans, etc., that are emitted every day of the year from this multinational corporation's cash cow. I seriously believe I have the right to know what toxins my fellow community members and I are absorbing every day by living in this area, and how contaminated the soil and water are by this incinerator. A comprehensive evaluation should be conducted by an independent third party, with input from the community, that studies the air, water and soil for toxic and persistent air pollutants, and how far these disperse into the environment. Oregon DEQ should hold a public hearing with the surrounding community regarding the Covanta incinerator, to discuss the health risks involved by living in the area, and other options for alternatives to burning garbage, such as zero waste models and landfills. Rewarding Covanta with state subsidies encourages a disincentive from creating and establishing real zero waste solutions.

This is an environmental justice issue, and you cannot, in good conscience, continue to ignore this ongoing injustice. This incinerator is also the number one emitter of greenhouse gases in Marion County and has the dubious distinction of being the 19<sup>th</sup> largest generator of these gases in the state of Oregon. Certainly, this is an issue that needs to be addressed, given the ongoing and worsening consequences of catastrophic climate disruption. Covanta is also included by DEQ among the twenty most toxic industries in Oregon. In addition, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Marion County has the worst air pollution in Oregon, when the density of particulate matter in the air is measured. Given these facts, the Covanta incinerator should not be rewarded with the state's clean energy money. Instead, the Legislature should move past outdated polluting technology and invest in authentic clean air technology to move toward 100% renewable energy. When Renewable Energy Certificates were established in 2007, they were intended to support new technologies that are renewable and clean, such as solar and wind, that do not emit greenhouse gases.

You need to deny these Renewable Energy Certificates for Marion Covanta while you seriously consider alternatives to this present situation that only benefits a multinational corporation and whatever other arrangements this corporation has made with our systems of governance at the expense of the community at large. Alternatives need to address waste reduction efforts to make real progress toward confronting the existential threat of climate change.

Trash incineration at Covanta still results in dependence on landfills, since this facility must dump the 30 tons of toxic ash in a landfill for every 100 tons of trash that it burns. The other 70 tons of trash it burns becomes extremely toxic air pollution, that in turn contaminates water, soil and other natural systems. If Covanta closed, waste could be taken to the nearby Coffin Butte Landfill that has an expected lifespan remaining of more than 20 years. Furthermore, landfill greenhouse gas emissions are significantly less than incinerator emissions. In the meantime, Oregon could develop and invest in Zero Waste solutions that will reduce our dependence on either incinerators or landfills, both which could then become obsolete, especially as new waste disposal technologies develop.

Oregon's governmental entities have the duty to govern with all of their constituents in mind, and to be representing them to promote the health, safety and well-being of the community at large. The apparent negligence of failing to regulate this multinational corporation's environmental impacts and Oregon's apparent corporate capture is indicative of the dysfunctional nature of our systems of governance, that favor corporate money over transparency and environmental integrity. I urge you to please oppose House Bill 4049.

Respectfully,

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