

Submitter: Allison Ruskell

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB488

To: Senate Energy and Environment Committee

From: Allison Ruskell

Re: Closing the Medical Waste Loophole SB 488

Chair Sollman; Vice Chair Findley; and members Sen. Golden, Sen. Hayden, and Sen. Lieber of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee,

My name is Allison Ruskell, and I live in Salem.

I am writing to you today in support of SB 488, The Medical Waste Incinerator Act to close the loophole that allows the Covanta Incinerator in Brooks, Oregon to burn excessive amounts of medical waste under municipal waste instead of medical waste regulations.

I am new to the community in Salem, Oregon but have grown to love it immensely. Learning that the Covanta Marion incinerator is regulated as a municipal waste incinerator despite the mass amount of medical waste they take in and burn a mere 15 miles away was disheartening. I know many people who live within the 7 mile radius that is considered at risk due to emissions and am concerned about the toxic fumes and their impact on the community in Marion Polk county as a whole. I don't want my new home to be polluted due to improperly regulated medical and industrial waste.

I urge you to pass SB 488 in the 2023 legislative session to ensure that the loophole is closed and environmental injustices in Oregon are addressed. The Covanta Marion incinerator is located in a low-income, Latina/o community and is only .4 miles away from a K-12 Private School. It is also near a multitude of farmland and college campuses such as Northwest University Salem Campus and Chemeketa Community College. The health risks for people in a 7 mile radius are not insignificant. The incinerator emits toxic chemicals such as dioxins, mercury, and lead into the air which can have devastating impacts on the human body and brain. Being located in a low income and Latino/a community disproportionately impacts them, and additionally, the proximity to numerous schools which have students as young as 3 years old is entirely unacceptable. Oregon needs to do better and properly regulate the emissions of the Covanta Marion incinerator.