

Submitter: Rachel Levine  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
Measure: SB488

To: Senate Energy and Environment Committee  
From: Your name/organization  
Re: Closing the Medical Waste Loophole SB 488

Chair Sen. Janeen Sollman; Vice Chair Lynn Findley; and members Sen. Jeff Golden, Sen. Cedric Hayden, and Sen. Kate Lieber of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee,

My name is Rachel Levine, and I live in Salem, Oregon, and/or I am writing on behalf of the students of Willamette University.

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.

As an environmental science major and sustainability minor, climate change and pollution are two very big concerns of mine. Incinerators are far from the most efficient or cleanest source of energy, which is why I'm in favor of reducing the amount of waste, and further regulating the kind of waste, which is burned at the Covanta Incinerator. With the current amount of waste being burned, Covanta is emitting approximately 162,437 metric tons of greenhouse gasses. These levels of emissions are equivalent to driving 35,327 passenger cars for a year. Despite the fact that this inordinately high level of pollution is a result of energy production, the energy being created does not stay within the area. Instead, the local people must bear the burden of the numerous health effects of incineration while reaping none of the benefits of electricity. The incinerator actively worsens the surrounding area through the production of not only greenhouse gasses but also dangerous substances such as heavy metals.

In numerous past health evaluations, Covanta's incinerators have been found to emit several different heavy metals, such as lead and mercury. Even in small amounts, these elements can cause numerous irreversible health problems such as respiratory problems, brain damage, and cancer. Given the incinerator's proximity to a school, it is imperative that the trash being burned and the level of pollution being emitted are more tightly regulated.

This is unquestionably an environmental justice issue considering the demographic

of the incinerators surrounding the neighborhood. A disproportionate amount of the surrounding population is POC as well as low-income. These groups of people are least likely to be able to protect themselves from environmental pollutants as pervasive and harmful as the ones being emitted by Covanta's incinerator

I urge you to pass SB 488 in the 2023 legislative session to ensure that the loophole is closed and that Oregon does not become a dumping ground for other states' waste.