

Submitter: Daja Long  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
Measure: SB488

To: Senate Energy and Environment Committee  
From: Daja Long, Willamette University  
Re: Closing the Medical Waste Loophole SB 488

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

I'm grateful for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 488. I'm a student at Willamette University, who's concerned with climate justice in Oregon.

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 excess amounts of medical waste under loose municipal waste regulations instead of medical waste regulations.

It should be a priority to regulate the Covanta incinerator in Oregon appropriately, which is continuously harming the environment and the residents in the Brooks area. A dear friend of mine who attends Willamette University has recently felt stronger asthma attacks due to heavier pollutants in the air. She is originally from California and moved to Oregon to invest in her education, only to be stricken with the negative effects of the environment. The other week, she left campus in the middle of a weekday and was rushed to the hospital due to her difficulty to breathe. It saddens me to see her health condition limit her ability to be a successful student. Asthma is a short-term effect of toxic air pollutants; in the long-term, the release of excessive amounts of mercury, lead, and other various heavy metals, contribute to cancer, DNA damage, and cognitive impairment. It would be devastating to see the potential of underrepresented students disregarded, in the face of ignoring the consequences of Covanta's harmful incinerator, located in a low-income latina/o community. The incinerator releases overwhelming amounts of mercury and lead. "The element's harmful consequences on children's health include... neurocognitive disorders, behavioral disorders, respiratory problems, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. Much attention should be given to heavy metals because of their high toxicity potential, widespread use, and prevalence" (PubMed.gov). To allow Covanta to continue its under regulated, detrimental operation by importing tons of medical waste from outside the state line, would be a huge mistake, regarding equality and safety for all Oregonians.

I urge you to pass SB 488 in the 2023 legislative session to ensure that the loop hole

is closed and that Oregon does not become a dumping ground for other states' waste.

Sincerely,  
Daja Long