

Dear Members of the Senate Committee On Energy and Environment,

I am writing on behalf of myself, Linda Wallmark, and my husband, Gary Wallmark. We currently live in Eugene, but for 40 years we lived in Salem. We have long been concerned about the health, climate and social justice implications of the Covanta Waste Incinerator. We strongly support SB 488, the Medical Waste Incineration Act, and we urge you to do the same.

SB 488 limits the toxic emissions of Covanta by imposing upon the facility the stringent federal regulations for medical waste incinerators vs. the current weak Oregon DEQ regulations for municipal waste. Covanta is not simply a municipal waste incinerator. The facility actively imports untreated medical waste because they can earn more per ton for medical vs. municipal waste. This portion of the waste stream has been growing in recent years. Covanta currently burns 14,000 tons of in-state and out-of state medical waste on an annual basis. And it can get worse. The contract allows Covanta to burn up to 18,000 tons of out-of-state medical waste.

Why does it matter what kind of trash they burn? Medical waste contains a high percentage of plastic and burning plastic produces much more toxic pollution than municipal waste. That's why Covanta gets more money per ton for medical vs. municipal waste. That's why the stringent federal regulations governing the incineration of medical waste vs. municipal waste exist.

Why do we allow Oregon to be the dumping ground for the toxic pollution that other states don't want? Why do we allow Covanta to reap the financial benefit of poisoning the air, soil and water while the low-income communities of color in the surrounding area pay the price?

It's well past time that Oregon places limits on Covanta's actions. SB 488 does just that.

Please pass SB 488 out of committee.

Linda and Gary Wallmark