

Submitter: Jeremie Robins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB488

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

Thank you for your time and attention. In my time as a Salem resident, I have been encouraged by public commitments to justice from the seats of state government. The Oregon Health Authority calls for Health Equity; the Department of Human Services for Service Equity; OHCS for Diversity and Inclusion; and the DEQ for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. SB 488 presents an opportunity to act on these commitments.

A facility that burns 14,000 tons of medical waste per year should be regulated as a medical waste incinerator. That status quo of lesser "municipal waste" regulation is not merely a loophole, but a tragic Equity gap. For over thirty years, the worst of the Covanta incinerator's pollution has hung heavy over the historically lower-income and often racially-marginalized communities of Northeast Salem. The problem only grows as the facility takes in more and more medical waste on top of the already-toxic garbage burning, and from and farther farther away - even out of state. Now Covanta tells us that emissions of more than 10 times the cadmium, 8 times the carbon monoxide, and 7 times the lead allowed by EPA regulations for large medical waste incinerators are somehow "safe." Safe for whom, exactly? For those who already experience racial and economic discrimination? For wider Salem and its neighbor cities, depending on the weather?

I trust that the Senate Energy and Environment Committee, after seeing Covanta delay Cleaner Air Oregon's review process over three years, will not take its company representatives at their word. Their entire operation continues to threaten our air quality, and therefore our health. SB 488 will, at the very least, bring Oregon's waste management closer the Equity principles that state agencies have already committed to. It will also allow one of these agencies, the DEQ, to hold Covanta accountable with more frequent inspections.

Jeremie Robins  
1815 24th St NE  
Salem, OR 97301