

Submitter: Damon Motz-Storey
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure: SB488

I am so glad to see Senate Bill 488 on the agenda and wish to thank the bill's co-sponsors for bringing forward this common-sense legislation. I urge the members of this committee to move it forward with a Do-Pass recommendation.

I worked for many years on understanding the issues relating to the incineration of municipal and medical wastes. I was astounded to learn that although medical waste carries a much higher percentage of hazardous materials that lead to releases of extremely toxic materials when burned, municipal solid waste incinerators are not subject to the same emissions regulations that medical waste incinerators are held to, even when the amount of medical waste burned in a municipal incinerator is as much or more than what is burned in a medical waste incinerator. Thus, SB 488 makes a highly reasonable update to state policy that will protect Oregonians from unsafe exposures to emissions from burning medical waste in municipal incinerators, such as the Covanta Marion facility in Brooks, OR that is visible east of I-5 near the Keizer exits.

Let's think of it another way: you wouldn't burn a piece of treated lumber in your household fireplace because it releases toxic particulates that are harmful to you and your family, especially children, babies, the elderly, and anyone with a lung condition. If I then gave you nine pieces of slightly-less-treated lumber and told you that now it's OK to burn it all together in your fireplace, would you suddenly feel comfortable with that? No, because you're still getting exposed to the most dangerous particulates no matter how diluted they are by other emissions (which, by the way, are also harmful to your health).

Ultimately, we need to move away from large-scale incineration of both medical and municipal waste. But SB 488 merely brings us up to an appropriate standard for what level of emissions from medical waste incineration has been deemed unacceptable by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Please support Senate Bill 488 and thank you for your good work on this committee.