

Submitter: AE Hillenburg

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB488

February 17, 2023

To: Senate Energy and Environment Committee

From: AE Hillenburg, Willamette University

Re: Closing the Medical Waste Loophole SB 488 support

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

My name is AE (pronounced "eh"), and I live in Salem attending Willamette University. I am writing on behalf of residents of the Salem region.

I am writing to you today in support of SB 488, The Medical Waste Incinerator Act to close the loophole that allows the Covanta Marion Incinerator in Brooks, Oregon to burn excess amounts of medical waste under municipal waste instead of medical waste regulations. I care deeply about the health and safety of the communities I share this land with—and I will not stand for Covanta's exploitation of changed contracts from 2019 to further pollute Oregon.

Incinerators are dirtier than coal. They produce more dioxin, mercury, and lead than coal plants, specifically 5.3 times more mercury than coal plants to produce the same amount of energy (EJN). Covanta's average mercury emissions is 0.0034 mg/m³, while the federal limit for medical waste incinerators is 0.0013 mg/m³ (2020 Oregon DEQ report). This is 2.6 times more than the federal limit. These levels of toxicity are extremely dangerous to the human body and brain, especially when factoring bioaccumulation in soils, water, air, plants, and animals that we consume.

Medical waste regulations will result in cleaner air for the various schools where students range from preschool to college, as well as the numerous family farms that are within less than 2 miles of the incinerator. We can see the Marion Covanta Incinerator easily from Interstate 5, but their inadequate data on waste import and pollution are shrouded in secrecy.

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.

Thank you,

Æ Hillenburg
Willamette University