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Chair Sen. Sollman, Vice-Chair Sen. Findley, and members of the committee,

My name is Dr Andy Harris, and I am testifying in support of SB 488 on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. As a 37 year resident of Marion Co, I followed the increasing import of medical waste to Covanta Marion, 14,168 tons in 2021, from around Oregon, Washington, California and Canada. This has been driven by profits: Covanta currently charges \$38.06/ton for Marion Co. solid waste and \$550/ton for out-of-state medical waste, more than 14X as much in tipping fees.

Medical waste is far more toxic than municipal waste, containing much higher amounts of plastics, polyvinyl chloride, and heavy metals. At Covanta Marion cadmium emissions (averaged over 3 recent years) are 10.7 times the Federal Large New Medical Waste Incinerator Limits, as updated in 2008. Lead emissions are 7.5 times and mercury emissions are 2.6 times the current federal medical waste incinerator standards. These heavy metals cause birth defects, learning disabilities, lowered IQ, hyperactivity, attention deficit, violent behavior, and other neurologic disorders.

Worse yet, Incineration of solid waste at Covanta Marion creates new compounds like dioxins and furans, the most toxic chemicals on the planet other than radioactive isotopes. Dioxins are formed when organic material (like wood and paper) are heated and cooled in the presence of chloride products such as PVCs from medical waste plastics. Dioxins cause cancer, birth defects, autoimmune diseases, and infertility.

Additionally, in this age of global climate change, for every ton of waste that Covanta burns (about 175,000 tons/year), it releases nearly a metric ton (about 162,000 metric tons/year) of greenhouse gases (GHG). Incineration results in the immediate release of GHG and speeds up the process of climate change, unlike landfills that slow the release of CO2 over many years, and allow methane to be captured.

Covanta Marion is now the 4 th or 5 th largest medical waste incinerator in the country. The irony is that it is still operating as a municipal incinerator with much laxer standards for toxic emissions. SB 488 would close this loophole and require Covanta Marion to comply with current national standards for large medical waste incinerators.

For the sake of public health and safety, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility urges your support of SB 488.

Thank you.

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