

Submitter: Janet Lorenzen
On Behalf Of: Willamette Univ Students
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure: SB488

To: Senate Energy and Environment Committee
From: Willamette University Students
Re: Closing the Medical Waste Loophole SB 488

Chair Sollman; Vice Chair Findley; and members Sen. Golden, Sen. Hayden, and Sen. Lieber,

We are writing to you today in support of SB 488, The Medical Waste Incinerator Act to close the loophole that allows the Covanta Incinerator in Brooks, Oregon to burn excess amounts of medical waste.

All non-recycled waste from Willamette University goes to the Covanta Marion Incinerator. As WU students concerned about reducing waste and ethical waste disposal, we have an interest in how the Covanta Marion Incinerator is regulated. We do not want our waste burned, however, if we cannot alter the waste stream, we at least want the strictest possible health regulations on the incinerator to protect neighboring communities where many low-income people of color live, work, and play. To us, this is an issue of environmental racism.

The Covanta Marion incinerator is located in a low-income, Latina/o community and is only 0.4 miles away from a K-12 Private School. It is also near a multitude of farmland and college campuses such as Northwest University Salem Campus and Chemeketa Community College. The heavy metals being emitted by the incinerator then bioaccumulate in the crops in the farmland which are then consumed by the surrounding Salem community. These toxins, including lead and mercury, have lasting detrimental health effects such as neurocognitive disorders, behavioral disorders, respiratory problems, cardiovascular diseases, DNA damage, and cancer. The amount of lead polluted by Covanta is 7.5 times higher than the federal limit for a medical waste incinerator, while Mercury emissions are 2.6 times over the federal limit.

One reason hospitals are reducing waste incineration is because they think it violates the hippocratic oath to do no harm. We have a similar oath "Non nobis solum nati sumus" or "Not unto ourselves alone are we born." Meaning the health of an individual is directly tied to the health of the community and the land they reside on. Students are passionate about the health of our student body as well as the greater Salem community. We are concerned about pollution not only to the air, but to soil, rivers, and water, in the form of highly concentrated toxic ash that directly harms wildlife and human health. We want current and future students to have healthy, safe, and clean air.

Thank you for your vote for clean air,

The Students of Willamette University, including:

Cameron Cole

Makayla Prentice

Emma McEvoy

Rachel Ryan

Cassie Drazen

Jordan Pierson

Sophia Rosenberg

Ian Curtis

Maya Colclazier

Keira Boehle

Oleksandr Dmitrichuk

Monica Ledesma-Ramirez

Zia Brandstetter

Gage Brock

Ajia Buvit

Sadie Horner

Emily Embleton

Marcella Weiss

Zander Huston

Marni Aosved

Jade Brandow

Isabella Montalvo

Hailey Faber

Ella Rice

Avery Solon

Kate Rivera

Jillian Skelding

Alexandria Sims

Kyera Lutton

Brice Hoerauf

Ría Martínez

Soren Putney

Clara Coady

Lee Loftin

Alena Langford

Representing:

Queer Student Union

President of Climate Action Alliance

President, Associated Students of Willamette University

Sustainability Steering Committee, Lead Student Chair
PPLE Department, Theatre Department, The Bistro (supervisor)
Multiracial Collective Co-President, Asian Coalition for Equality Chief Social Media
Officer, Restorative Justice Coalition Vice President
Zena Farm Student Steward
Treasurer of the Associated Students of Willamette University
The Mill | Vice President