



March 7, 2023

Senator Sollman, Chair  
Senate Committee on Energy & Environment  
Oregon Legislature

**Re: Environment Oregon and OSPIRG support Senate Bill 488**

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee,

Environment Oregon is a statewide, member-based environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water, open space and a liveable climate. OSPIRG is a statewide, public interest group. We are writing in support of Senate Bill 488, Oregon's Medical Waste Incineration Act.

Burning municipal solid waste is harmful to public health and our environment. Incinerators work by burning waste material at extremely high temperatures, producing ash and air pollution. Some of these emissions include cancer-causing and highly toxic pollutants like dioxin, which can cause skin, blood, liver and reproductive problems. Incinerators also release heavy metals and mercury, a neurotoxin that impairs brain function.

Burning medical waste is even more harmful, since it primarily consists of plastics such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which are known to emit more toxic pollutants than most other municipal waste. Very few municipal waste incinerators are permitted to burn untreated medical waste, but Covanta Marion, the last remaining incinerator in Oregon, is one of them.

We support more strictly regulating these air emissions to better protect Oregonians and our environment.

Senate Bill 488 will close a regulatory loophole in Oregon's air quality laws by giving DEQ more authority to assess how many tons of medical waste Covanta burns every year– and if the facility exceeds the specified weight limits, DEQ can apply the stricter emissions standards for medical waste incinerators set under federal law. Senate Bill 488 is an important step forward to reducing toxic pollution, in order to protect public health and the environment.

Sincerely,

Celeste Meiffren-Swango  
State Director, Environment Oregon

Charlie Fisher  
State Director, OSPIRG