

TO: Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Natural Resources  
RE: Support of SB 488-7  
DATE: May 30, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Dembrow and Representative Pham and members of the Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Natural Resources,

I am Prof. Janet Lorenzen, Chair of the Sociology Department at Willamette University. I strongly encourage the Committee to support SB 488A and approve the -7 amendment to secure \$118,537 in funding for an environmental monitoring pilot project. Senator Deb Patterson, Beyond Toxics, 350Salem, the Clean Air Now! Coalition, and many WU students have worked tirelessly to support this bill.

**SB 488A-7 would improve and modernize air quality monitoring** at the Covanta Marion Incinerator. For years I have been trying to get quality data about heavy metals emitted from the incinerator just 10 miles away from the capitol. Existing programs haven't helped. **Once-a-year monitoring for a diverse waste stream is inadequate** because emissions correlate with the type of waste loaded into the burners.

When it was built, the incinerator was sold to Marion County as a local, municipal waste incinerator, but the new owners have done a bait and switch. This is an old story of out-of-state investors maximizing profits while externalizing air pollution, toxic ash, and long-term health effects to an environmental sacrifice zone. **The amount of medical and industrial waste burned at the facility has skyrocketed since 2019. The incinerator currently burns over 6 times the amount of medical waste that the EPA allows for a large medical waste incinerator.**

This is a textbook example of **environmental racism**. Many of the people who live nearest to the incinerator are rural, low-income, Latinx, with low English proficiency, and little access to political representation. They are bearing the burden of unknown amounts of heavy metals, dioxins and acids resulting emitted by the incinerator. Requiring continuous emissions monitoring will benefit communities located near Covanta, including Salem, Brooks, Woodburn and Keiser. Within the deposition radius of Covanta's toxic emissions are schools serving diverse populations including the Chemawa Indian School and Chemeketa Community College.

For years Covanta has delayed giving data to DEQ. They have stalled, asked for extensions, had to re-do tests because they lacked accuracy, turned in confusing data, and once even turned in data from a newer incinerator in Canada on the date when their own data was due. **Please make them continuously test, what they're making us continuously breathe! We can't afford to wait!**

Thank you for your support,  
Prof. Janet Lorenzen