

Testimony to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources on Senate Bill 488-7

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

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

The Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonpartisan, environmental nonprofit that works at the nexus of human health and the environment. We would like to express our support for SB 488-7- specifically for the requirement to do continuous emissions monitoring in solid waste incinerators, and the very nominal \$118k for DEQ to undertake such a 12-month program.

Incinerators are essential to waste disposal, capable of burning over 90% of total waste generated. Solid waste incinerators that combust medical waste effectively destroys bacteria, pathogens, and viruses, making it an important tool for waste disposal. However, medical waste incinerators, which include both infectious medical waste and non-infectious general waste, can emit a substantial amount of pollutants. Heavy metals, acid gasses, and carbon monoxide are a few of the pollutants that these incinerators release into the atmosphere.

Medical waste also often includes plastics, like PVC and PCB, which results in the dangerous emission of microplastics and toxics into the air and environment. By limiting the amounts that can be combusted and monitoring emissions, the air quality of nearby residents will be improved. This change will most strongly improve the air quality of individuals surrounding the incinerator facilities- Northeast Salem and Woodburn- communities that have a high amount of lower income and people of color—thus making this matter an environmental justice issue.

Covanta is currently estimated to be incinerating over 11,000 tons of medical waste per year. **The technology for better pollution controls and emissions monitoring exists.** This is also illustrated by our past advocacy surrounding the Owens- Brockway

glass plant in East Portland.¹ In fact, over 10 percent of people in Oregon had current asthma in 2020.² Reducing air pollution, monitoring emissions, and improving air quality for all Oregon residents is of the utmost importance- and would also address local environmental justice issues. This is what SB 488-7 seeks to achieve.

Thank you,

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¹ <https://degblog.com/2022/07/15/owens-brockway-install-controls/>.

² https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/most_recent_data_states.htm.