



Thursday, February 6th, 2020

Re: Oppose House Bill 4049

Chair Power, Vice-Chair Bonham, Vice-Chair Sollman, and Members of the Committee,

Guided by the values and expertise of medical science, Oregon PSR (Physicians for Social Responsibility) works to address the gravest threats to health and survival. Our membership is over 2,000 health professionals and public health advocates from across the state.

We strongly urge you to reject House Bill 4049, which would allow Covanta Marion, the only waste incinerator in Oregon and the state's 19th largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions, to receive renewable energy credits. A bill identical to this one, Senate Bill 451 A, failed in the 2019 legislative session. We urge you not to spend precious time moving it forward in this session. Renewable energy credits (RECs) are meant to support new renewable energy projects, not an old, polluting facility from 1987. Every dollar that would be spent giving a corporate handout to Covanta, a multinational company, would be a dollar not spent on clean technology such as wind and solar energy projects that promote green, living-wage jobs and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. We signed on to the Oregon Public Health Association's call to action on Climate, Health, and Equity and are participating in their day of action today. We affirm that climate change is one of the greatest public health emergencies that has ever faced humanity, and we call on the legislature to prioritize climate action and clean energy investments in every decision made and vote cast.

Last year this bill's predecessor was designated a Major Threat by the Oregon Conservation Network and subsequently appeared on the Oregon League of Conservation Voters' environmental scorecard. HB 4049 has also been declared a Conservation Network major threat. Oregon PSR sees the precedent of awarding RECs to Covanta Marion as a major threat to public health. Covanta has not needed RECs and there is no evidence that a lack of receiving them is going to cause the facility to close. Covanta Marion is the number one single source of particulate matter, nitrous oxides, sulfur oxides, and dioxins in Marion County, all of which are extremely harmful to human health despite the facility's conformity to overly loose state and federal standards. There is no safe level of exposure for many of these contaminants, which impact farmworkers, day laborers, school children, and all those who live, work, and play in Marion County. Oregon has no obligation to give RECs to Covanta Marion despite any handshakes that may or may not have occurred in prior sessions. You have the opportunity to protect the integrity of our renewable energy credits by rejecting this bill and set a good precedent for using every tool in the toolbox to protect public health from climate change and refusing to reward polluting facilities with clean energy money.

I'd like to also draw your attention to the plethora of testimony that's been submitted in opposition to this bill by Marion County residents, health experts, and the Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association (OSEIA). Oregon PSR's Dr. Patricia Kullberg submitted testimony that references an impartial study conducted by Metro in 2017 that shows the greenhouse gas comparison between Covanta Marion and area landfilling is not what Covanta and Marion County are claiming. Dr. Kullberg has also pointed out that much of Covanta's cited data is based on incinerators that are newer and incomparable to the facility in Marion County. I'll also let you know that we are working on a long-term campaign in Marion County to promote a just transition to zero-waste so that we need not burn or dump up to 90% or more of the waste that is currently sent to Covanta.

Thank you for your service in the legislature and for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

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