

To: Senate Energy and Environment Committee  
From: Kendall Morrow  
Re: Closing the Medical Waste Loophole SB 488

Chair Senator Janeen; Vice Lynn Findley; and members Sen. Jeff Golden, Sen. Cedric Hayden, and Sen. Kate Lieber of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee

My name is Kendall Morrow, and I live in Salem. I am writing in solidarity with Beyond Toxics, PCUN, 350 Salem, OEC, and others in support of SB 488.

I am 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 excessive amounts of medical waste under municipal waste instead of medical waste regulations.

As a resident of Oregon for over 21 years, I can say that I've seen first-hand the impact climate change on the place I call home. Our typically temperate summers are now month-long heat waves that resulted in a heat dome with days reaching 115 in some areas of Oregon. Along with that, our winters are getting colder with a severe ice storm three years ago that left hundreds of thousands without power or shelter. All of this can be attributed to the changing climate that has caused these extreme temperatures.

The Covanta Marion incinerator is one of many reasons why these events occurred. Currently, the Covanta Marion incinerator is **severely impacting the surrounding population and environment by emitting toxic chemicals such as dioxins, mercury, and lead** into the air which can have devastating impacts on the human body and brain. These toxic chemicals are being launched into the atmosphere and are polluting the air. The amount of lead polluted by Covanta is **7.5 times higher than the federal limit for a medical waste incinerator**. Mercury emissions are **2.6 times over the federal limit**. This plant is located near a **low-income, Latina/o community and is only .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 surrounding area consists of **79% People of color (all of Oregon is 24% of color), and 55% low income (all of Oregon is 33% low income)** all of which is in a five-mile radius of Covanta Marion.

Additionally, the waste incinerator is **worse than coal**. Waste incinerators produce more dioxin, mercury, and lead than coal plants do. In fact, incinerators put out more than 5.3 times more mercury than coal plants to produce the same amount of energy. Such energy is so expensive, **PGE refuses to buy it due to its large price tag**. In fact, most of this energy goes directly to Portland or out of state instead to the population of Marion County. Why should we support/house an energy source that isn't ours to use? Even more so, why should we continue to

allow the production of said waste incinerators when it's emitting harmful toxins into our air?

**Creating bad air affects everyone, more so those who are closest.**

Covanta has the responsibility to be good neighbors to the communities it resides in and affects, and this bill will help implement the necessary regulations for it to do so.

I urge you to pass SB 488 in the 2023 legislative session to ensure that the loophole is closed and that Oregon does not become a dumping ground for other states' waste.

Thanks you for your consideration,

Kendall Morrow