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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB488

Communities living in the shadow of the tall smokestack of the Covanta Marion incinerator have asked the State Legislature and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to strengthen air toxics emission standards for this facility. Covanta Marion is the 4th largest incinerator in the nation that still burns untreated medical waste. Covanta brings in more than 50% of the medical waste it burns from out-of-state. The combustion of this waste is responsible for dangerous emissions of dioxin, lead, mercury, cadmium, dozens of volatile organic compounds, climate-driving gasses, and more. However, the Oregon DEQ regulates the incinerator under very weak rules. Senate Bill 488 will require the DEQ to adopt more health-protective federal air pollution standards for incinerators that burn a large amount of medical waste. We need to improve the rules in place.

This is important because:

- Medical waste incineration is more toxic than municipal waste, due to a higher percentage of plastics, and because the plastics in medical waste contain more polyvinyl chlorides (PVCs). This leads to higher levels of toxic air emissions, particularly dioxin, and lead.
- Covanta Marion is currently regulated under emissions standards for municipal waste (i.e., city trash) incinerators, rather than the more stringent standards for large medical waste incinerators.
- Oregon's mid-Willamette Valley should not be the dumping ground for toxic medical waste from other states and countries. Other states export their waste to Oregon so that it is "out of sight and out of mind." As a result, Oregonians have to breathe more toxic air.
- Oregon law currently has a large loophole that allows the Covanta incinerator to exceed EPA guidelines for safe emissions levels for new, large medical waste incinerators.
- Communities that are impacted by Covanta's dirty air emissions are environmental justice communities in the Northeast Salem and Woodburn areas. But those impacts aren't just limited to those communities. It impacts all living creatures on this earth.
- The US EPA guidelines provide for greater control technology and lower emissions limits for medical waste incinerators because of the toxicity of their emissions.

A recent study concluded that nearly everyone — 99 percent of the global population — is exposed to unhealthy levels of tiny and harmful air pollutants, known as PM 2.5, according to a new study released on 3/6/2023 in Lancet Planetary Health. The findings underline a growing urgency for policymakers like yourselves, public health

officials like yourselves to take action.

Please do the right thing. Please pass SB 488. Don't let a business like Covanta make life-and-death decisions on our behalf. Please remember you are elected officials servicing the public interest and not large corporations that use Oregon as a dumping ground for waste.