

Submitter: Benton Elliott

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB488

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. The US EPA guidelines provide for greater control technology and lower emissions limits for medical waste incinerators because of the toxicity of their emissions. 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 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. We need to close this regulatory loophole to protect our air quality and public health. 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. Communities that are impacted by Covanta's dirty air emissions are environmental justice communities in the Northeast Salem and Woodburn areas. Communities of color have stood up to protest pollution from incineration as one of the movement's original environmental justice issues. I support SB 488 and urge you to support it too. Thank you.