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Chair Sen. Sollman, Vice-Chair Sen. Findley, and members of the committee,

First of all I wish to thank the bill's cosponsors for bringing forward this common-sense legislation.

My name is Carina Perez Europa, and I am writing in support of SB 488 on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. 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.

Senate bill 488 would enhance regulation of waste incineration in Oregon to better protect the environment and human health. Waste incineration pollutes soils, rivers and air with heavy metals and toxic chemicals where they can harm human health and wildlife. This is especially true of burning medical and hazardous waste which the Federal Government has designated stricter standards for because of the increased danger to human health that comes from burning this type of waste.

The Covanta Marion waste incinerator is known to be one of the top 20 polluting industries in Oregon, emitting hundreds of toxins that are known to be dangerous to human health. Waste incineration creates and releases harmful chemicals and pollutants into the air and surrounding environment. Particulate matter in the air has been shown to cause lung and heart disease, heavy metals such as lead and mercury can cause neurological diseases and PFAS and dioxins which can cause cancer and other health problems.

A lot of the particulate matter and air pollutants that are emitted into the air and surrounding environment do not break down and disappear, instead they accumulate in the surrounding soil and water. Air particulates released spread to nearby communities making the impact of these pollutants far reaching.

The incinerator burns thousands of tons of imported out of state medical waste, and due to a loophole in regulations, it is not subject to emission standards for medical waste incinerators, but rather the lower standards applied to municipal waste incineration. SB 488 would close that loophole and will give the Department of Environmental Quality the authority to accurately assess how many tons of medical waste is burned annually at a trash incinerator facility and, if the specified weight limits are exceeded, apply the stricter emission limits required for medical waste incinerators under federal law.



The bill gives us guardrails to protect our health and address an environmental justice community that is being forced to bear the burden of improperly regulated burning of medical waste. Many of the people who live nearest to the incinerator are part of rural, BIPOC and agricultural communities in the mid-Willamette Valley, this includes my own family who has lived in and around the nearby area for the last 30+ years. Our communities are being exposed to heavy metals and dozens of hazardous air toxics created from burning out of state and out of country imported medical waste burned at the Covanta Marion incinerator, which adds the burden of increased truck traffic and greenhouse gas emissions to transfer this medical waste to Covanta from as far away as Georgia and Canada.

Without proper regulation the trend of importing more and more dangerous medical and hazardous waste into Oregon from out of state will only continue to grow. SB 488 makes sure that Oregon has strong air emission limits that will protect human health and guide waste incineration policies into the future and make sure that Oregon doesn't become the go to dumping ground for dangerous medical and hazardous waste in the country.

Thank you for your service in the legislature.

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