

## **Testimony in Support of SB 488**

**TO:** Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and, members of the Committee

**FR:** Alyssa Rueda

**DT:** March 7, 2023

**RE: Testimony to the Senate Committee on Oregon's Medical Waste Incinerator SB 488**

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and, members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my support for SB 488. Each year, Covanta Marion, Oregon's municipal waste incinerator, burns more than 176,000 tons of municipal, medical and industrial waste. Of this, approximately 14,000 tons of incineration is in-state and out-of-state medical waste. The amount of out-of-state hospital and medical waste that is burned has steadily increased in recent years. The burning of medical waste is known to emit more toxic pollutants than most municipal waste because the medical waste is more complex in composition. Dioxin compounds and other dangerous chemicals increase as medical waste incineration increases. The air emissions that are produced by Covanta exceeds the amount that the U.S. EPA allows for *a large* new medical waste incinerator. This is a huge loophole that needs immediate closing. I am shocked and disappointed that this has been an allowed practice in Oregon. Right under our noses, we have an unregulated polluter taking in waste from other places and damaging the home and lives of many here in Oregon.

This is an environmental justice issue. Historically, waste incinerators and trash dumps are placed in communities of lower income and communities of color. Closing this loophole is not only for the wellbeing of all Oregon residents but especially for those frontline communities that are historically marginalized. Hard-working adults are forced to live near an out right polluter, as well as children. The waste incinerator is in communities where children play, live and learn. Waste incineration pollutes soils, rivers, and the air with heavy metals and toxic chemicals where they can harm human health and wildlife. Heavy metal ingestion by children causes learning disabilities, lowered IQ, hyperactivity, and attention deficit. Allowing this loophole to

continue, which allows Covanta to pollute more than what the federal limits would permit, will only allow for more out-of-state and in-state medical waste to be burned. Will only allow for more heavy metal contamination in surrounding communities. No loophole should exist. There are set regulations for medical waste incinerator emissions for a reason.

The passage of Oregon's Medical Waste Incineration Act, SB 488 is critical to achieving clean air for the people of Oregon, particularly those living in the mid-Willamette Valley. SB 488 will close a regulatory loophole in Oregon's air quality laws that allows a municipal waste (trash) incinerator to burn large amounts of medical and industrial waste, including waste trucked in from out-of-state.

Thank you for your time. I strongly encourage the Senate Committee On Energy and Environment to pass SB 488 to protect adults and children from unregulated amounts of toxic chemicals from unchecked medical waste incineration.

Sincerely,  
Alyssa Rueda