



**Testimony in Support of SB 726 - Methane Monitoring at Landfills
Submitted on behalf of Beyond Toxics**

**To: Chair Lively, vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the
Committee**

Dear Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mason Leavitt; my background is in Geographic Information Systems or GIS and I have worked with communities facing air quality challenges from landfills for several years now. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Beyond Toxics, an environmental justice advocacy organization working to ensure clean air, safe water, and a healthy environment for all Oregonians, especially marginalized and rural communities disproportionately impacted by pollution.

We urge your support for SB 726 because it addresses serious regulatory gaps in methane emissions monitoring at Oregon's landfills. This bill offers a common-sense update to data reporting standards and ultimately enables ODEQ to do its job more effectively while improving transparency and public accountability.

Key Findings From Our Research

In 2024, Beyond Toxics examined 32 Surface Emissions Monitoring (SEM) reports from eight Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) landfills across Oregon. We found that

1. **Privately owned landfills**, mostly operated by national waste corporations, excluded nearly **50%** of landfill surface areas from their methane monitoring.
2. **Publicly owned landfills** excluded about **10%** of landfill surface areas, signifying a concerning disparity in compliance and oversight.
3. **Most Oregon landfills do not report their monitoring** routes using reliable GPS data, which makes it impossible for ODEQ to confirm that landfill operators are following the 25-foot monitoring paths as required by law. reporting their surface emissions monitoring locations using verifiable GPS tracking, making it impossible to verify that owner-operators are monitoring every 25 feet as required by law.

4. **Basic data points**, such as average methane readings per monitoring grid, **are missing from reports**, leaving regulators uninformed about compliance.

These regulatory gaps align with the EPA's recent enforcement alert identifying widespread noncompliance in landfill methane monitoring policies nationwide.

SB 726 Offers A Solution

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, and landfill emissions are a threat to public health and safety. Landfill gas can carry hydrogen sulfide, VOCs, and many more toxic chemicals and particles that harm nearby communities.

SB 726 can fix this by requiring landfill operators to submit data in formats compatible with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), such as shapefiles or GEOJSON. This change will:

1. Help DEQ verify full surface coverage and compliance with existing laws;
2. Save staff time by providing easy-to-analyze, map-based data;
3. Offer better integration of methane monitoring technologies, such as drones, satellites, walking paths, and gas infrastructure, to help identify leaks and inform mitigation efforts.

Proven, Cost-Effective Technology

Across the nation, states and agencies are already using modern technologies to improve their data reporting capabilities! Some examples to consider include:

1. [Orange County, CA](#), and [Kansas operators](#) both utilize drones for monitoring;
2. [Pennsylvania](#) reduced landfill methane emissions by 37% using remote sensing;
3. California and Colorado have both already moved forward with similar methane monitoring legislation.

SB 726 doesn't require new technology, it simply ensures operators report the data they already collect in ways that help the DEQ do its job more efficiently.

Oregon Has An Opportunity to Prioritize Public Health in 2025!

Oregon needs accurate, transparent data to protect public health, hold polluters accountable, and meet stronger climate goals. SB 726 is a practical policy that offers DEQ new tools to enforce existing rules and encourages the adoption of best practices in modern methane monitoring.

This legislation is especially important because landfills are among the largest sources of methane emissions in Oregon. In some cases, like the Coffin Butte landfill in Benton County, methane levels have exceeded regulatory limits by nearly 200 times! The U.S. EPA has conducted multiple inspections at Coffin Butte and found “widespread shortcomings” in its monitoring practices, which include uncontrolled methane plumes and the improper exclusion of monitoring areas. These findings highlight the urgent need to require robust, verifiable monitoring methods.

By incorporating modern technologies such as satellites, drones, and direct monitoring tools, landfills can quickly identify and repair leaks in their gas collecting systems, thus protecting public health and advancing Oregon’s environmental standing.

Beyond Toxics strongly supports a **YES** vote on **SB 726!**

Sincerely,

Mason