

To: Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction  
Re: Covanta Marion Waste Incinerator, SB 451 and HB 2020  
From: 350 Salem OR  
Scheduled Committee Hearing Date: March 1, 12:00 PM  
2/26/19

Dear Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Power and Committee Members,

HB 2020, popularly known as the *Clean Energy Jobs Bill*, excludes regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from the direct combustion of municipal solid waste to generate renewable energy [HB 2020 section 10(2)(b)].

Covanta Marion is a waste incinerator in Brooks, OR, the only one of its kind in the state. As a byproduct of this incineration process it produces some electricity. Covanta has recently asked Sen. Beyer to sponsor a bill, SB 451, which would designate Covanta as a renewable energy resource under the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). This would allow Covanta to qualify for renewable energy credits. Covanta's carbon dioxide emissions are well above the 25,000 ton limit under the proposed cap-and-invest bill, HB 2020. Gaining approval as a renewable energy resource under SB 451 would more firmly secure Covanta's current exclusion from the HB 2020 requirements under section 10(2)(b) of that bill. SB 451 should not be adopted and HB 2020 should be amended to delete the section 10(2)(b) exclusion.

Here are the uncontested facts: Covanta Marion is listed as the 20th largest source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions among industrial sources with air quality permits in the state according to DEQ. It is the largest single point emission source in Marion County. Much of the municipal solid waste they burn is plastic. Burning plastics emits not only CO<sub>2</sub> but also toxins. As a result of the plastic and similar waste from manmade materials or fossil fuels, their "anthropogenic" greenhouse gases comprised nearly half of the over 160,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents that they emitted in 2017.

The exact details about the toxins and their capture, the methods and validity of testing and reporting of pollutants, the so-called "avoidance" offsets to be applied in calculating the impact of their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and myriad other technical aspects of the issue can be argued or require independent evaluation; but this basic fact remains – Covanta Marion is the 20th largest industrial emitter of greenhouse gas in the state and it burns plastics as a fuel for its electricity. Plastics are produced from fossil fuels. Other RPS approved facilities include wind, solar, geothermal and hydro facilities. In no sense is Covanta Marion either clean or renewable.

Covanta Marion claims that SB 451 simply corrects an error of omission in prior laws defining a renewable energy source as previously sponsored by former state senator Chris Edwards from Eugene in 2009. They say that Senator Edwards led them to believe that Covanta Marion would be included as a renewable energy resource. The intent of former state senator Edwards in 2009 is not relevant today. Earlier attempts to

amend the Renewable Portfolio Standard to allow old biomass projects to qualify should never have included a facility that burns plastics.

In any case, climate conditions have changed significantly since 2009. Ten years later the effects of climate change have only accelerated. The recent report of the IPCC has made it abundantly clear that we stand at a critical juncture. We have only twelve years in which to take aggressive action to stem the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere or face runaway climate change.

A supposed “promise” made ten years ago — quite simply in another time in our understanding of the climate crisis — to designate Covanta Marion as a clean renewable energy source is not a sound reason to confer this designation now. We shouldn’t look back to what happened ten years ago, but instead look forward ten years. What happens over the next decade is critical. 350 Salem OR is less interested in keeping supposed past promises to a corporation than in keeping a sacred promise to our children—the promise that they inherit a healthy, habitable planet. Don’t we owe more to them than to Covanta Marion? The supposed “error” made years ago isn’t a simple oversight. It’s not just a matter of tidying up the record. Covanta Marion has had ten years to “correct” this mistake. It’s obvious that the push now to be designated as a clean energy resource under SB 451 is an attempt to forestall the possibility of being subject to the provisions of HB 2020, the *Clean* Energy Jobs Bill.

As its title clearly implies, the *Clean* Energy Jobs Bill is about *clean* energy, not energy produced by burning plastics and other toxin-producing materials. Please put our promise for our children’s future above the supposed past promise to a corporation. Do not allow Covanta Marion’s emissions to be classified as a renewable energy resource under the Renewable Portfolio Standards and allow them to slip away from their responsibility to preserve our atmosphere and protect our planet. SB 451 should not be adopted, and HB 2020 should be amended to delete the section 10(2)(b) exclusion. Let’s reward truly *clean* renewable energy sources.

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