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House Committee on Energy & Environment

Chair Power and members of the Committee,

My name is Sal Peralta. I am speaking on behalf of Zero Waste Oregon, a coalition promoting state wide policies to reduce materials going into Oregon landfills and promote solid waste policies that protect the quality of our air, water and habitat.

Our coalition, which on this issue, includes the Independent Party of Oregon, Oregon Community Rights Network, Oregon Progressive Party, and Zero Waste McMinnville, opposes HB 4049, which seeks to make the Marion County Covanta solid waste incineration facility eligible for renewable energy certificates..

This proposal works against the state's air quality, climate, conservation and solid waste management goals, incentivizing activities that need to be curtailed if we are to meet the state's current emissions reduction goals -- nevermind any new goals that might be established by this legislature.

Policymakers should be extremely skeptical about Covanta's claims that these tax credits are necessary to stave off worse environmental outcomes, such as increased trucking and landfilling of material.

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I am a city councilor in McMinnville. Our city faced many similar arguments a few years ago about transportation and costs when we stopped sending materials to a local landfill whose recycling and recovery were not adequate for our city's needs.

Those arguments did not prove out in our case. Switching providers enabled our city to increase the number of materials being recovered to include organics like yard debris, some kinds of food waste and styrofoam.

Similarly, I do not believe they will prove out in Marion County. As vice chair of the Mid-Willamette County of Governments, I can tell you that there is a strong and growing push in Marion County for zero waste policies. The continued incineration of recoverable materials at Covanta will impede those efforts toward better recovery solutions.

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Covanta is a profitable industry. They are here advocating for credits that will be windfall profits to them. However, the renewable energy certificates that Covanta is seeking are a limited resource that should be reserved for projects that are truly environmentally friendly and not used to protect the business operations of one of Oregon's largest emitters of greenhouse gases and toxic particulate matter.

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We urge you to allow this bill to die in committee.

Sincerely,

Sal Peralta

Zero Waste Oregon

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