



March 1, 2021

TO: House Committee on Business & Labor
FR: Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)
RE: HB 2698

OSPIRG is a statewide, grassroots organization representing thousands of Oregonians.

OSPIRG supports HB 2698 as an important consumer protection and waste-reduction policy.

Fundamentally, this is a bill about consumer protection in the digital age. Do we want Oregonians to have the ability to maintain and repair their electronic devices, or will we let manufacturers have a monopoly on repair and force us to buy new - increasing the financial burden on Oregon families and benefitting big out-of-state companies over local, small businesses?

Manufacturers use their power in the marketplace to make things harder to repair. Increasingly, companies are making repair proprietary so that only the manufacturing company can do the repairs. There are a couple basic things you need to fix a piece of electronic equipment -- tools, schematics, replacement parts, diagnostic software and firmware -- but most companies won't make that available for sale, so even if repairs can be done by the user or an independent repair business, it's more challenging and done with suboptimal products.

Right to Repair requires manufacturing companies of consumer electronic equipment to make the diagnostic equipment, schematics, replacement parts, and tools to the user or a third party at a fair and reasonable price. In this case, the legislation defines "fair & reasonable" as the same price they already offer those tools, schematics, and parts to an authorized repair provider.

HB 2698 is narrowly-tailored to help Oregon households.

Our research suggests that Oregon households could save \$330 dollars per year by repairing their electronics and appliances instead of replacing them. That adds up to 544 million in statewide savings.¹ HB 2698 is focused on helping those households keep what they own working instead of having to buy new.

To that end, this bill is significantly narrower in scope than a similar bill before this committee in 2019. It is intended to make it easier to extend the life of household and consumer electronic devices like phones, computers, tablets, appliances and other common products that would otherwise cost hundreds or thousands of dollars to replace.

Importantly, HB 2698 explicitly exempts tractors and other agricultural equipment, motor vehicles, medical devices, HVAC systems, solar systems, and anything that has never been available for retail sale to consumers.

¹ Repair Saves Families Big, Feb. 2021, OSPIRG: <https://ospirg.org/feature/usp/repair-saves-families-big>

Right to Repair makes repairs already being done safer, cheaper, and more effective.

Independent repair businesses and consumers are already attempting repairs of their products. There are guides and videos as well as third-party parts for sale online for many of the products covered by HB 2698. In fact, small independent repair businesses in Oregon, over 50 of whom have submitted a letter on the record in support of right to repair, already repair electronics every day. However, these are often done without manuals and diagnostic tools, high-quality parts, and repair schematics needed to serve their customers and local communities as well as they could.

Manufacturers already have repair manuals, replacement parts, and diagnostic tools. Right to Repair simply requires them to make those available to everyone else so there is a more robust and effective market for repair.

Why We Need Right to Repair

- **More choices for consumers.** Many people don't live close to an outlet for the original manufacturer. Consumers should have more repair choices, which are currently stifled by big corporate manufacturers.
- **Less waste.** Oregonians dispose of some 1.7 million cell phones each year.² Many of those devices could be used again, but simple repairs can become impossible without the proper tools and information.
- **Greater availability of affordable used devices.** Many people can't afford the latest gadgets. If we extended the life of tablets, laptops and other electronics, it would allow more consumers more access to these important technologies.
- **STEM education.** How can we train the next generation of engineers if we block people from having basic information about how the technology in our lives works? Repair teaches people about technology, and inspires and empowers a new generation of entrepreneurs and inventors.
- **More opportunities for small business.** More access to repair parts, tools and information means more opportunities for local small businesses to grow or new businesses to start. Employees would gain valuable STEM skills as well.

OSPIRG urges you to support HB 2698.

² Recharge Repair, Feb 2018, U.S. PIRG: <https://uspirg.org/news/usp/after-apple-slows-phones-interest-repair-spikes>