



February 08, 2024

Dear Members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Energy and Environment:

We wanted to showcase Oregon consumer support for the right to repair in general as part of our support of Senate Bill 1596.

Below, we offer selected stories that Consumer Reports members from across Oregon shared with us in February 2023. We hope that these stories help demonstrate precisely how right to repair legislation will actively improve repair experiences, unnecessary wallet drains, and sustainability practices for consumers across Oregon.

All best,

Stacey Higginbotham  
Policy Fellow  
Consumer Reports

## **Lillian Iwatsuki of Salem, OR**

We used to have cell phones and other small gadgets with user replaceable batteries. No more. Now when the battery won't hold a charge or overheats there is little recourse but to purchase another. Same goes for cracked screens and power on-off buttons both which I have replaced in the past for myself and others. This is wasteful and expensive corporate planned obsolescence. If this doesn't annoy you it should. And it should be stopped. Yesterday.

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## **William Dillon of Corvallis, OR**

I received an e-bike from my brother-in-law's estate. It was a nice machine, and relatively new. I assumed that it would just need the battery to be charged up, and I'd have a nice way to avoid using my car.

Boy, did I have a rude awakening.

First of all, I didn't know that this bike was connected to servers over cellular, and needed an app to work. Secondly, I didn't know that the company that made it went out of business. Thirdly, I didn't know that the 2/3 of the major components of electric part of the bike are either locked by their manufacturers or undocumented.

Either of the first two problems would have made a normal person give up, and probably throw the bike away. This would have wasted a ton of materials and energy. Damaging the planet, and missing the whole point of electric transportation.

Luckily (maybe), I'm not a normal person. I'm an incredibly stubborn, and I'm an embedded electronics engineer with a Ph.D. in Computer Science. So, I tried to make the bike work like normal, without all the locked-down components. I had to take the bike completely apart, and reverse engineer all the major components.

I had to take the battery pack apart (not a safe thing to do, generally), and reverse engineer the battery management system, and get it charged back up. Luckily the battery still appears to be in good shape.

I had to figure out everything about how the motor controller worked. I thought I had good news there, because the company actually has a useful website, and some technical information on it. Unfortunately, though, their business model is based around selling to OEMs, and allowing them to lock the motor controllers down. The program to even interact with the motor controller isn't even available to end users (the registers are `_also_` password protected). I would have been stuck here, had it not been for someone that was willing to break the law and share the program on an internet forum. It took *\*days\** of searching to find it.

Finally, I was able to find a company that makes a controller for do-it-yourself e-bike builders that is able to control this motor controller, after some variables are set using the program I mentioned above. They didn't want to work with me, and said they didn't support this bike. But I lied, and told them it was for a different bike with the same motor controller. I realize I'll have no warranty because of this, but I don't have other options.

The only way I was able to save this expensive and massive object from the landfill was through exceptional skills, persistence, and the willingness of one individual to break the law by sharing a maintenance tool. This is frankly unacceptable. Not only is it a right of the owner to maintain their property, but it is a necessary hedge against companies going out of business, shutting-down servers, and becoming unable to support the products that people buy.

I also want to point out, that this bike *\*isn't\** an VanMoof! It's *\*another\** cellular-connected e-bike company that went out of business. This is not a one-off case. These companies *\*will\** go away, and we must develop contingencies to deal with them!

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### **Phil Sano of Portland, OR**

In the year 2000 I was a daily volunteer at Free Geek, my community technology center in Portland, Oregon. I would see 100s of people bringing in their old computers everyday. There was tons of steel, plastics and heavy metals like cadmium, chromium (and more I couldn't pronounce.) I realized, this was just the tip of the tip of the iceberg. The majority of e-waste was going to the dump whenever it stopped being useful. The implications were staggering.

Meanwhile we also had a steady stream of volunteers eager to learn about computers. Particularly elderly and underemployed people who were eager to learn anything about these mysterious boxes. The programs we provided meant we had labor to process the e-waste while having ample computers volunteers could learn to repair. One hand washes the other. This kind of program is difficult to maintain, although we have seen it replicated in several different cities around North America.

The Right to Repair could mean that we would have the ability to solve our own problems and not be so dependent on others.

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### **Jeff Whittaker of Salem, OR**

My story is one of many that I have heard about. If it was just a few cases I would not write. But I meet hundreds of people and hear similar stories of frustration and excessive costs due to barriers to small businesses having the right to repair technical products. My personal need for

Right to Repair services relates to a broken iPad. My business is based here in Salem. But I travel a lot and need Right to Repair services not just here in Oregon, but in every state! My iPad broke and I am not able to get it repaired at a reasonable cost. It has become trash. However, I have not thrown it out and hope the chance may appear someday. This problem sharply blocked me from doing demos and making sales while on a sales trip. The lack of an affordable, simple repair blocked me from earning thousands of dollars and bringing in taxable dollars for my company and for Oregon's Dept of Revenue to collect.

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**Rachel Shepard of Eugene, OR**

I had to replace a 4 year old \$2200 refrigerator. It needed a \$300 part that was impossible to get. It infuriated me that the manufacturer doesn't make sure that these kinds of affordable repairs are available to consumers. The waste of money and resources is shameful.

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*These stories were submitted by members. They have not been checked by Consumer Reports for accuracy. The stories reflect the views of the submitting members, and not necessarily those of Consumer Reports.*