



Including everyone in our digital future

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Right to Repair SB 1596 - Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Dear Chair Janeen Sollman, Vice-Chair Lynn Findly and members Senator Jeff Golden, Senator Hayden and Senator Kate Lieber:

Free Geek is a nonprofit digital equity organization with a vision to include everyone in our digital future. Our mission is to sustainably reuse technology, enable digital access, and provide education to empower people to reach their potential.

Each year, we collect close to 2 million pounds of e-waste and divert it from landfills. We reuse as much of the technology we collect to help us close the device gap that currently impacts 8% of the population in Oregon and 11% of Americans. Annually, we redirect 10,000 devices and more than 14,000 other digital tools back into the community. This accounts for only 25% of the technology we take in.

According to the US Census Bureau, the 2018 American Community Survey and Digitunity.org mapping tool, over 200,000 individuals in Oregon rely on a mobile device such as a smartphone and tablet for work, education, and participation in today's digital world.

In 2022, Free Geek was forced to close down its tech support bench because it was too expensive to keep open, and we struggled to find funding to help us provide this service to everyone. We stopped repairing and refurbishing most mobile devices because they became difficult to fix. In the last two years, we've had to recycle close to 32,000 mobile devices. Lack of access to parts, tools, and labor to repair these devices, and the associated costs just was not sustainable.

I want to highlight one example of how repair barriers impact our ability to repair devices and get them in the hands of people who need them. This was highlighted in a New York Times article from November. Despite receiving close to 15,000 donated iPhones and other smartphones last year, we were only able to refurbish less than 300. The remaining iPhones had to be sent to be shredded and recycled. This is in large part because of the issue of parts pairing that's been mentioned. We simply decided that for the most part, these devices were simply too difficult to fix.



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The device gap in Oregon and across the United States continues to grow, broadening the digital divide. We believe that technology reuse is the best way to keep low to no-cost technology available for the community while extending the life of devices.

Free Geek can advance digital equity through technology reuse, which is why we support SB1596.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan M. Muro, Jr.", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Juan M. Muro, Jr
Executive Director
Free Geek & Coalition of Digital Equity