



Metro



Right to Repair (SB 542)

Companies use their power in the marketplace to make things harder to repair. Some companies design products to be impossible to repair -- such as gluing the battery in a smartphone so it cannot be replaced -- or making repair proprietary so that only the manufacturing company can do the repairs. Most companies won't make the tools, manuals or replacement parts 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 laws require manufacturing companies to make the diagnostic tools, information, replacement parts and tools available to the user or a third party available at a fair price.

Reasons to Support Right to Repair

Repairing the Digital Divide: Early in the pandemic, a nationwide laptop shortage left millions of students unprepared for virtual learning. Due to disruptions in the supply chain, families in Oregon experienced delays before receiving their laptop orders. In May 2020, it was estimated that more than 75,000 students across the state were without a device at home. Right to Repair would give schools and other institutions the information they need to maintain equipment, and empower the refurbished computer market, saving taxpayer dollars and improving digital access for Oregon families.

Saving Families Money: Being able to fix phones, computers, and appliances instead of buying new would save the average Oregon household \$330 per year. That adds up to \$540 million in savings across all Oregon households.

Reducing E-Waste: Partly because repair and reuse is so difficult, Oregonians dispose of an estimated 4,800 cell phones every day. E-waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world, and it adds toxic heavy metals like lead, mercury, and cadmium into our landfills. With more repair, these materials will remain in use instead of filling up landfills, be more useful for recyclers, and reduce the burden of new source material, manufacturing, and transportation of new devices.

Cutting Climate Pollution: Since 85% of the energy and climate impact associated with a smartphone comes from manufacturing, it's estimated that if every Oregonian extended the life of their phone by just one year, it would be the equivalent of removing 8,100 cars off the road in terms of climate emission.

Supporting Small Business: Repair work is typically done by small local businesses, and more repair means more opportunities for those businesses to grow or new businesses to start. Employees gain valuable STEM skills.

FAQ

What does Right to Repair cover?

Oregon's proposed Right to Repair legislation covers common household and consumer products, such as phones, computers, and appliances. In order to be covered, it must have "digital electronics that are embedded within or attached to the product," essentially it has to have a computer chip. It explicitly exempts cars, agricultural equipment, medical devices, HVAC systems, solar systems or associated energy storage, or anything that is not available for sales to consumers, meaning no heavy industrial or commercial equipment.

What does Right to Repair require of manufacturers?

It requires them to make available replacement parts, software and physical tools, and any documentation or schematics needed for repair that they also make available to their authorized repair providers or that they use to do repairs on their products. It doesn't require them to produce any new documentation, tools, or parts that they don't already have and are already being used for repair.

Does Right to Repair pose safety or cybersecurity risks?

No. Manufacturers have built their repair tools, parts, and diagnostics to be used by minimally trained technicians in order to control labor costs. These same parts, tools, and diagnostics can be used with equal outcomes by any trained technician. As pointed out by the Federal Trade Commission, there is no empirical support for the idea that manufacturer repair is safer than any of their competitors.

Furthermore, products are either secure by design, or they are not. Manufacturers do not provide authorized repair technicians with secret security keys -- because such secrets would not be kept. Right to Repair reforms only ask for necessary repair tools, including security tools, that are already provided to authorized repair technicians. In fact, cybersecurity experts at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society have testified that Right to Repair reforms actually increase cybersecurity. In restricting access to the materials consumers need to fix their devices, manufacturers prevent them from carrying out necessary maintenance. This creates a [lapse in security](#), and an opportunity for malicious actors to attack.