



Maine LD 1487 Testimony

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I am Director of Sustainability at iFixit, the free repair manual for everything, with over 90,000 guides for how to fix everything from toasters to tractors. I'm here to voice support for LD 1487, because repair is a key part of a more sustainable electronics future.

Electronics manufacturers talk a lot about making more sustainable electronics. They'll tell you about their designs that reduce hazardous chemicals, designs that use recycled plastic. But they usually won't tell you the truth: The most sustainable phone is the one already in your pocket.

We're making too much stuff. There are 16 billion cell phones operating in the world today.¹ And we're throwing away too much stuff. If you put one year of US e-waste on one side of a scale and every single blue whale alive today on the other, the e-waste would be heavier.² We're recycling just a tiny fraction of that e-waste—about 85% of it goes to landfills.³

Sure, we should be recycling more. Yet recycling won't solve the e-waste problem. 17 of the metals in a cell phone can't be recycled at all.⁴ The same is true of most plastics in electronics, because they're treated with flame retardants.⁵

We need to slow down the rate of our consumption, and the best way to do that is to make sure we're getting the absolute most out of the stuff we've got. That means we've got to fix it when it breaks. Consumer Reports found that 8 of 10 Americans had replaced a broken smartphone, appliance, or vehicle in the past 5 years, most sooner than they wanted.⁶

To make sure that people can fix things when they want to, we've got to make sure that repairs are available and affordable. LD 1487 would help restore competition in the repair market, which is a huge first step toward a more sustainable electronics future.

¹ Statista. (2023). Forecast number of mobile devices worldwide from 2020 to 2025.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/245501/multiple-mobile-device-ownership-worldwide>

² The US was generating 6918 kilotons of e-waste annually in 2019 (Forti, V., et al., 2020, The global e-waste monitor, https://ewastemonitor.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GEM_2020_def_july1_low.pdf). There are no more than 25,000 blue whales alive today (American Oceans, 2022, What is the population of blue whales? <https://www.americanoseas.org/facts/population-of-blue-whales/>). The average blue whale weighs approximately 300,000 lbs (Marine Mammal Center, 2023, Blue whale, <https://www.marinemammalcenter.org/animal-care/learn-about-marine-mammals/cetaceans/blue-whale>). One year of US e-waste is therefore about the weight of 46,120 blue whales—far more than alive today.

³ The Global E-waste Statistics Partnership. (2023). United States of America.

<https://globalewaste.org/statistics/country/united-states-of-america/2019/>

⁴ Compound Interest. (2015). Recycling rates of smartphone metals.

<https://www.compoundchem.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Recycling-Rates-of-Smartphone-Elements.pdf>

⁵ Sahajwalla, V., & Gaikwad, Vaibhav. (2018). The present and future of e-waste plastics recycling. *Current opinion in green and sustainable chemistry*, 13(102-107). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S245223618300452>

⁶ Consumer Reports. (2022). Consumer reports survey finds Americans overwhelmingly support the Right to Repair.

https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/press_release/consumer-reports-survey-finds-americans-overwhelmingly-support-the-right-to-repair/