

Henry Welch  
US PIRG Right to Repair Campaign Associate  
Testimony for Housing and Economic Development Committee  
Jan. 6th 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Henry Welch, I am a Right to Repair campaign associate representing the US Public Interest Research Group, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for the health, safety, and well-being of consumers. Today, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1908.

Right to Repair has a simple premise: If you buy something, you own it, and you should be able to fix it however you see fit. Recently this idea has been threatened by manufacturers who restrict access to the parts, tools, and information to repair their products to only their own employees or authorized repairers. The right to repair would require manufacturers to share these repair materials to consumers and independent repair shops, creating a fair repair market for manufacturers, small businesses and consumers.

In 2021, the FTC published a report regarding anticompetitive practices in the repair market, entitled *Nixing the Fix*. In it, the FTC found that “repair restrictions have made it difficult for consumers to ... make repairs on their own or through an independent repair shop.”<sup>1</sup> Further, the FTC published a policy statement stating that “restricting consumers and businesses from choosing how they repair products can substantially increase the total cost of repairs.”<sup>2</sup>

These warnings were realized in US PIRG’s analysis of American spending on electronics.<sup>3</sup> The cost of repair is often very close to the cost of buying a new device, meaning all too often, consumers buy new devices instead of fixing them. But the Right to Repair would save families big, reducing household spending on electronics and appliances by 21.6%, saving an average family \$382 per year. Maine households collectively could save \$680 million annually by repairing their electronics and appliances.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nixing the Fix: An FTC Report to Congress on Repair Restrictions*: 54, 2021

<sup>2</sup> *Policy Statement of the Federal Trade Commission on Repair Restrictions Imposed by Manufacturers and Sellers*, FTC, July 2021

<sup>3</sup> *Repair Saves Families Big*. US PIRG, 2023

Right to Repair has been gaining traction across the country. Some form of Right to Repair bill has been introduced in all 50 states and has passed in 9. Manufacturers have also come out in support of certain Right to Repair legislation -- though many are still working to undermine progress.

Repair restrictions also hurt independent repair businesses, who struggle to serve their customers when they can't access basic repair materials on fair terms. After talking to dozens of repair shops across multiple states in the country including in Maine, I've heard firsthand how difficult it is for these small businesses to get what they need, fix devices, and help their customers and community.

The Right to Repair is essential to protect consumer rights to fix their stuff, help independent businesses, and restore what it means to own something. We would love the committee to advance LD 1908, thank you.