

Ali Mann

Testimony in favor of LD1908

Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

January 6, 2026

Good morning Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the joint standing committee on housing and economic development. My name is Ali Mann, and I'm a resident of Portland. I'm here to testify in favor of LD1908. Three years ago, I started a group called Ripe for Repair in Portland, which I continue to help organize with a team of other volunteers.

I'm happy to report that enthusiasm for repair is alive and well in Portland, where every month anywhere between 30-100 of us gather to help each other fix lamps, clothes, furniture, bikes, shoes, toys, and small appliances. These repair meetups help us in lots of ways: we save money, learn how all kinds of things work, get to know our neighbors, save things from the landfill, and learn to cooperate with folks who we may not agree with on some other things. At the risk of sounding too grandiose, community repair events like these (and versions of them exist in a growing number of places across the state) contain a lot of the remedies for what ails society these days.

If this bill were to become law, it would indeed open up a large and growing category of consumer goods to our fixers. At the same time, it would, I believe, have an even more powerful effect: taking the practice of repair from the marginal and niche to the mainstream.

Currently, despite the enthusiasm for repair at our events, in the world outside of repair cafes it is an uphill battle against throw-away culture. People throw things out when they break for lots of reasons: replacements can be cheap, people don't have the time for fixing, people are drawn to shiny new things. But the most common reason, I think, is a widespread, general belief that nothing is fixable. The idea of "planned obsolescence"--meaning a product is designed to fail so as to produce more profit for the manufacturer--is so dominant and engrained that it becomes a self-defeating, self-fulfilling prophesy. It keeps people away from events like ours, because they (often wrongly) assume everything is junk and therefore unfixable, or things are just designed to fail--and that's that, end of story.

The right to repair law in Maine would bring about a meaningful change in this attitude. By opening up a huge and growing group of consumer products to possible repair by regular people and small businesses, we have the chance to change the norm. This law would give regular people the opportunity to have some agency over our things, to better trust our purchases, to learn how things work, to strengthen our ties with our skilled neighbors and small businesses, and to start to see those things--and maybe each other--a little differently.

Thank you.

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