

Maryland PIRG

RIGHT TO REPAIR

The Honorable Andrew P. Harris
U.S. House of Representatives
1533 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
U.S. House of Representatives Majority Leader
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger III
U.S. House of Representatives
2416 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Trone
U.S. House of Representatives
1213 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John P. Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2444 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
U.S. House of Representatives
431 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anthony Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
1505 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
May 31, 2022

Dear Maryland Representatives,

As businesses, educators, environmental advocates and consumer advocates in Maryland, we are writing to ask your support for pending “Right to Repair” legislation, specifically the Freedom to Repair Act - House Bill 6566 and the Fair Repair Act - House Bill 4006.

When something breaks, you fix it. That's just common sense. But when only the manufacturer or their “authorized technician” has the necessary parts, tools or information needed, they can charge whatever they want or push you into buying a new device. These manufacturer-imposed repair restrictions affect a wide variety of products from toasters to tablets, and even tractors. The result is surging repair costs and a massive amount of waste. For example, Americans dispose of some [416,000 cell phones](#) every day. Meanwhile, farmers across the country report losing time in the field waiting on “authorized” dealer service.

A Maryland PIRG research finds that repair can save the average household about \$330 per year, which totals [\\$735 million across the state](#), leaving more money in consumers’ pockets. And with

stronger repair rights, this money spent on repair will circulate with local repair shops, and reduce reliance on offshore manufacturing thus reducing supply chain pressure.

The Federal Trade Commission studied Right Repair for two years, and studied evidence from both sides. The result? A [unanimous report](#) confirming that repair restrictions hurt consumers and small businesses, and that manufacturers' arguments against Right to Repair -- such as assertions that repair access undermines safety, privacy, security or intellectual property -- are unfounded, with little or no evidence to support them. This issue has been fully vetted and it's time for action.

We hope you can co-sponsor the Freedom to Repair Act - House Bill 6566 - sponsored by Reps. Mondaire Jones (D-NY) and Victoria Spartz (R-IN). Today, a copyright provision unintentionally outlaws many repairs. 17 U.S.C. § 1201 (known as "Section 1201") is designed to protect copyrighted works from piracy and makes it a crime to bypass a digital lock set up to protect copyrighted content like music, video games or movies. But some manufacturers have exploited that provision by locking repair functions, too. These digital locks turn fixing your phone, computer, or tractor into copyright infringement subject to civil and criminal penalties. Repairing stuff that you own should not be a crime.

In addition, we hope you can support the Fair Repair Act - House Bill 4006 - sponsored by Rep. Joe Morelle (D-NY). Too often, manufacturers refuse to provide the parts, tools and documentation required to complete repairs of modern devices, including phones, appliances and tractors. The Fair Repair act requires equipment manufacturers to provide access to these necessary materials at a fair and reasonable price for a wide range of devices, excluding medical equipment. The policy is based on the existing, effective agreement between car manufacturers and independent repair shops.

Right to Repair is pro-consumer, pro-farmer, pro-competition, helps small businesses, cuts toxic electronic waste, addresses the digital divide and helps fight climate change. It has been fully reviewed by the FTC and Copyright office, and it's time for Congress to act.

Sincerely,

Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG
Corey Gaber, Baltimore Teachers Union
Jamie DeMarco, Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund
Humon Heidarian, Fair Farms
HoCo Climate Action
Neil Seldman, Institute of Local Self Reliance
Benjamin Orr, Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Marceline White, Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
Cecilia Plante, Maryland Legislative Coalition
Samuel Palm, Restore Computer Repair
Joshua Tulkin, Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter