



Testimony of VPIRG Consumer Protection Associate Daniel Brown concerning S.180 – Vermont Fair Repair Act

**Testimony before the House Commerce & Economic Development Committee
April 16, 2018**

Good morning, Chairman Botzow and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Daniel Brown and I'm a Consumer Protection Associate with VPIRG, the Vermont Public Interest Research Group. For over 45 years, VPIRG has advocated for the public interest in policy debates concerning the environment, health care, democracy, and consumer protection, and so I thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts on S. 180, the Vermont Fair Repair Act.

VPIRG strongly supports the concept of Fair Repair and the current version of S. 180, as passed by the Senate. VPIRG supports the creation of a working group, as Fair Repair is a complicated and multi-faceted issue, yet one in which there is a clear problem and clear need for a legislative solution.

The way the system of electronic repair for devices and appliances currently works puts consumers and repair shop owners at a severe disadvantage to the wealthy and powerful manufacturers that essentially control the marketplace. This is true in Vermont as it across the country.

For example, last year an independent repair shop owner was sued by Apple for using aftermarket iPhone screens at his repair business. Just last week, this repair shop owner won this lawsuit and while European courts have little bearing on the United States, this case is informative of Apples attitude towards independent repair. I have shared an article with the committee about this lawsuit.

In 2014 alone, 41.8 million tons of e-waste was created worldwide.¹ The EPA found that while e-waste only makes up 2% of the solid waste stream, it accounts for 70% of the hazardous materials found in landfills.² In the United States alone, of the 3.4 million tons of e-waste generated, only 29% was recycled in 2014.³ In 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency found that only 8% of smartphones phones

¹ <https://www.thebalance.com/e-waste-recycling-facts-and-figures-2878189>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

were recycled.⁴ We can never know how much of that e-waste was composed of electronic products that simply needed a repair or replacement part. A recent investigation by Greenpeace found that just a handful of electronic manufacturers are responsible for over 70% of e-waste worldwide.⁵

Instead of poisoning our environment and threatening our health, many electronic products could be repaired, re-used or properly recycled – and this would help the Vermont economy. An analysis by iFixit found that 200 repair jobs could be created for every 1,000 tons of used electronics.⁶

Passage of the Fair Repair Act in Vermont will benefit consumers, farmers and business owners in every corner of the state. This policy is good for consumers, for our environment, and for our local economy. For these reasons, and on behalf of our 50,000 members and supporters, VPIRG urges you to support S.180.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I'm happy to take any questions that you may have at this time.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://www.wastedive.com/news/greenpeace-apple-samsung-products-among-biggest-contributors-of-e-waste/446738/>

⁶ <https://ifixit.org/ewaste>