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Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB 412 “Consumer Protection – Right to Repair”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 3, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club submits this testimony in support of SB 412, a bill that would require an original manufacturer of digital electronic equipment to make available, on certain terms, certain materials or updates to an independent repair provider or owner. “Right-to-Repair” embraces the concept that products should be designed and built for maximum life rather than planned for obsolescence; durable products that break can easily be repaired because the manufacturers make their service manuals and replacement parts available. We already have right to repair for cars—local car mechanics are given access to all the same software diagnostics and service manuals that the dealerships have.

SB 412 will extend the life of digital electronic equipment, reducing the incoming waste in landfills and incinerators, conserving resources that would have to be spent on replacing broken equipment, reducing costs to consumers, and creating reuse and repair jobs right here in Maryland.

This bill will reduce digital electronic waste. Every year, large numbers of otherwise repairable and usable consumer electronics, such as smart phones, are unnecessarily discarded, with many ending up in landfills or incinerators. The average cellphone is replaced after less than three years.¹ One major reason is that the manufacturer won’t allow private repair shops or individuals access to the information needed to make necessary fixes. This repair monopoly results in higher costs to the consumer and frequently means that purchasing a new phone is either a better bargain or the only choice. Imagine if your car, like an Apple iPhone, could only be repaired by the original manufacturer!

It will conserve resources and prevent greenhouse gas emissions associated with mining and manufacturing replacements. Right-to-Repair is not just about reducing waste from discarded electronics. It also reduces the wasteful and environmentally harmful production of mined materials that form the guts of these products. In one study, production of a single iPhone6 was found to have used 295 pounds of raw minerals, 34 kilograms of ore, 100 liters of water, and 20.5 grams of cyanide.² The United States would save 7.8 million tons of raw materials per year if cell phones were used for just one year longer, on average. Mining and

¹Bloomberg Business, “U.S. Smartphone Replacement Lengthens to 33 Months,” August 22, 2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/press-releases/2019-08-22/strategy-analytics-us-smartphone-replacement-lengthens-to-33-months-despite-strong-interest-in-5g>

²Brian Merchant, “Everything That’s Inside Your iPhone,” *Vice*, August 25, 2017. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/433wyq/everything-thats-inside-your-iphone>

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

manufacturing materials for the newest iPhone represents roughly 83 percent of its contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere throughout its life cycle, according to Apple's manufacturing data. For a washing machine, it's about 57 percent.³

Finally, SB 412 will help the economy by generating new jobs in independent repair industries, creating competition in repair services that will save money for consumers.

In sum, Right-to-Repair is part of a zero waste, circular-economy approach that reduces waste, preserves valuable natural resources, lessens pollution of air, land, and water, increases consumer choices, and boosts the local economy with new jobs in the independent repair industry. We respectfully request a favorable report.

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³ Paola Rosa-Aquino, "Fix, or Toss? The 'Right to Repair' Movement Gains Ground," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2020.