

## Productivity Commission

### Re: Right to Repair

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Dear representatives of the Productivity Commission,

Thank you for investigating repair restrictions common in modern electronic equipment. Through my work on behalf of U.S. PIRG, an American non-profit advocacy organization, and U.S. PIRG Education Fund, its sister research and public education group, I have researched how repair is restricted in modern devices, and what impact that has on consumers and the planet.

My work has included collecting tens of thousands of public comments and (along with my staff) interviewing more than 200 repair technicians from a wide variety of repair fields (from personal electronics, to tractors and medical equipment).

I have concluded that repair is restricted in many ways. In some cases, consumers are misled about their rights to seek alternative repair options – such as the practice of putting “Warranty Void if Removed” stickers on products, even when consumer law would forbid this practice. In other cases, the technology is designed to require software tools to complete repairs, tools which the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) will not provide – a common occurrence on heavy equipment or agricultural equipment. Additionally, companies create exclusive deals with parts suppliers, such that necessary spare parts become unavailable outside of the manufacturers “authorized” repair providers. I would like to submit the following surveys and reports that I have participated in professionally for consideration in your investigation.

- 1) [Recharge Repair](#), Feb. 2018. This report investigates the impact of Apple’s “BatteryGate” or “ThrottleGate” on independent battery repair through interviews and surveys from technicians and repair shops.
- 2) [Warranties in the Void](#), Oct 2018. This report looked into warranty practices from major appliance manufacturers and found that companies frequently tell

consumers their warranty is conditioned on using only manufacturer-approved repair – 45 of the 50 companies were judged to make this claim.

- 3) [The Fix Is In](#), March 2020. This report includes a survey of more than 300 personal electronic repair technicians about the kind of repair they offer and what restrictions they face. The report also estimates the immense amount of waste and pollution generated by the rapid obsolescence timelines for smartphones.
- 4) [Hospital Repair Restrictions](#), July 2020. This report looked at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on hospital equipment repair, and how issues were exacerbated by restrictions to critical information, training and other repair material.
- 5) [Repair Saves Families Big](#), Jan. 2021. This paper attempts to calculate how much potential consumer savings would arise from expanding repair and product lifespans – and estimates that it would result in \$330 in saving from an average American family.

I would be happy to discuss these findings or their implications further, but I believe you will see that: 1) Repair restrictions are common across much modern equipment 2) these restrictions have significant consequences on costs, timeliness and convenience for repair customers 3) manufacturer-only repair systems are fragile, and prone to disruptions and backlogs when issues arise.

Sincerely,

Nathan Proctor