

February 27, 2023



Minnesota Senate
Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee

Re: SF1598 – Digital Fair Repair

Dear Chair Klein and Members of the Committee,

Eureka Recycling is submitting this letter in support of SF1598: Digital Fair Repair, also known as digital right to repair.

Eureka Recycling is a social enterprise recycler based in Minneapolis. Our mission is to demonstrate that waste is completely preventable. We employ 130 people with living-wage jobs who collect, sort, and market 110,000 tons of residential recycling every year. Our union drivers pick up recycling from more than 130,000 households in St Paul and surrounding communities. Our team sorts these recyclables into 15 different commodities that support our local supply chain. About 80% of our feedstock stays in Minnesota and 90% in the greater Midwest, where it is made into new products.

While we hold a clear and bold vision for a world without waste, we use our on-the-ground experience to advocate for tangible, real-world solutions to better manage our resources, reduce waste, support local economies, and build healthy, equitable communities. One of these zero waste policy solutions is the digital right to repair legislation.

Operationally, we have first hand experience with the barriers created when we cannot fix our own equipment. This happens most often with our materials handling equipment like forklifts, loaders, and skid steers. When simple repairs are needed, like replacing a joy stick or a fuel filter, we are unable to utilize our inhouse mechanics. Instead we need to wait about 2 weeks for a special tech to come out, pull out their laptop and recalibrate the machine. Or, in some cases, the tech needs to use special diagnostic equipment to identify a very simple and, what should be, inexpensive solution. This not only creates an additional cost for the outside labor, but it also impacts our productivity. We fall behind while we wait for the tech, trying to reassign staff to other tasks.

As a zero waste organization, we also see an even greater systems need for this legislation. Manufacturers have made it difficult to repair devices and equipment, and replacing them is often an easier and less expensive solution for consumers. This cycle creates two major adverse environmental impacts. First, it significantly increases mining and procurement of precious raw materials needed for producing electronics using energy-intensive technologies. Second, discarded devices and equipment create large quantities of electronic waste. If not disposed of properly, toxics from e-waste enter the soil and water, raising concerns about water pollution, soil pollution, and more.

Manufacturers have provided residents fewer and fewer viable ways to keep older electronics and crucial equipment functioning effectively. If Minnesotans could more easily repair their own devices, appliances, and farming equipment, they would not have to replace them as frequently, reducing reliance on the resource-intensive production process and cutting down on electronic waste.

Right to repair is a critical step toward a more sustainable economy in Minnesota. We ask for your support of SF1598 and appreciate your consideration of our comments. Please feel free to contact us with questions or for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Hoffman', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Lynn Hoffman,
Co-President of Eureka Recycling
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