

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment
on Senate Bill 542**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members—

On behalf of the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC), a nonpartisan, environmental nonprofit that works at the nexus of human health and the environment, I would like to express my support for SB 542 – and discuss the environmental health reasons why. SB 542 would require manufacturers and companies to make the diagnostic tools, replacement parts and tools available to repair electronic equipment without having to become an authorized repair provider.

SB 542 reduces hazardous waste for the environment:

SB 542 would allow us to “reduce, reuse, and recycle” our belongings to limit the waste going into our environment. Currently, manufacturers of everyday household items like vacuums, toasters, and smart phones use their power in the marketplace to make things harder to repair, and thereby force consumers to buy new things, rather than fixing or reusing them. Some companies design products without the parts necessary to fix a component, such as vacuum cleaners, or they make repair proprietary so that only the manufacturing company can do the repairs—all so they can make a profit.

Electronic waste or e-waste is difficult to recycle, toxic to human health and the environment, and contains non-renewable rare earth minerals that are being mined at an unsustainable rate. For example, it is estimated that Americans purchase 161 million new smart phones a year (an iPhone 6 requires 295lbs of raw minerals).^{1,2} As such, e-waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world.³

¹ <https://uspirg.org/feature/usp/fix>.

² <https://www.vice.com/en/article/433wyq/everything-thats-inside-your-iphone>.

³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/02/how-do-we-tackle-the-fastest-growing-waste-stream-on-the-planet/>.

Reducing hazardous waste reduces environmental toxins and exposures for workers:

Reducing electronic waste in our landfills can also reduce hazardous chemical exposures to our environmental and waste management workers. Essential workers, including hazardous waste workers are potentially exposed to organohalogen flame retardants, bromine, and heavy metals, from broken or decomposing electronic waste and electronics that have been sent to the landfill. Exposure to flame retardants have been shown to cause neurological damage, hormone disruption, and cancer.⁴ They bioaccumulate in humans, causing long-term chronic health problems.⁵

Furthermore, as e-waste breaks down in landfills, it can leach heavy metals into the soil and groundwater and contaminated crops, and into our water bodies and contaminate the fish.⁶ And when e-waste is incinerated at a landfill, it can release these same chemicals into the air into the surrounding communities- usually low income ones.

Reducing toxic waste can therefore reduce workplace exposures for those at the tail end of product life cycles and the surrounding communities next to the landfill. It can also create local economic opportunity, support local business, and keep parts and electronics more affordable for everyone.

We urge the Senate Committee On Energy and Environment to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

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⁴ <https://www.saferstates.org/toxic-chemicals/toxic-flame-retardants/>.

⁵ <https://www.saferstates.org/toxic-chemicals/toxic-flame-retardants/>.

⁶ <https://gerecycle.com/3-scary-effects-of-e-waste-on-the-environment-and-human-health/>.