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Chair Cutrona, vice chair Romanchuk, and ranking member Craig, thank you for allowing me to offer testimony in support of SB 176. Remember those Saturday morning trips with dad to Sears Hardware for a washer pump or a heating element for the dryer? The expert behind the counter scanned the microfiche screen, found the part number, and remarkably it was in stock. Mark off another job on the “honey-do” list. Those were the days. Unfortunately, days long gone because, “They just don’t make them like that anymore.”

Ohio should become a Right to Repair state, and this legislation is modeled after The Digital Fair Repair Act that recently passed in New York. Though New York has a Democratic legislature and governor, this legislation drew significant Republican support. That same thinking can be found in the pages of the conservative National Review. John Fund espoused support in January 2022 in an article entitled, “Right to Repair. A Consumer Movement That Left and Right Should Agree on.”

Right to Repair legislation is premised on a simple proposition: you purchased a product, own it, and should be able to repair it. The legislation simply makes it easier for consumers to repair electronic devices themselves, or find an independent shop to do it for them. It does this by requiring manufacturers to provide things that, without which, independent repair would be all but impossible, such as manuals, parts, and diagnostic tools.

One of the salient points of that column, with which I strongly agree, is that there is a difference between being pro-business and pro-market, a point that was made centuries ago by Adam Smith in “Wealth of Nations”. Under the guise of consumer welfare, we have seen the proliferation of end-user licensing agreements (aka EULAs,

South Park lampooned these years ago), software locks, planned obsolescence, and limiting the availability of parts. In reality, these things allow manufacturers to have a monopoly on repair.

Another aspect of this is philosophical: do we want to be a throwaway state and nation? I sure hope not. Rather than repair or recycle things, we simply throw them away. This is not sustainable and, in addition to being terrible for the environment, robs Americans of human agency, a concept that we've gotten away from in these technocratic times. It is a good thing to buy some tools, read a manual, and repair something that you would have otherwise thrown away. You might say it's empowering, even if all you did was change a fuse.

It also bonds citizens more closely to pride of ownership. We are moving closer to "life by subscription" every day, a concept that should horrify us all, though I suspect it brightens the day of folks like Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum. When you own something, you are more likely to take care of it, understand its inner workings, and be able to fix it when it breaks down. We used to be that way: we'd fix our own cars; fix our own pavement; and even renovate our own homes. Right to Repair legislation can help us find that spirit again, and we'd be doing it together not just as Republicans and Democrats, but as fellow Americans.

I'd be happy to take any questions at this time.