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New Report Shows What New Yorkers Are Trying to Fix, Underscores Need for “Right to Repair”

4.3 million visitors from New York went to the repair guide suite iFixit last year, but 6 of the top 10 manufacturers don't provide necessary parts and information

ALBANY - Today, NYPIRG released a new report, “What are New Yorkers Fixing?,” which analyzes data from the popular repair instruction website, iFixit.com. The report looks at what items people in New York state are trying to fix, and why that can be harder than it should be. Among the report’s top findings are:

- iFixit had 4.3 million unique visitors from the state in 2018.
- The most popular products people used iFixit to address were cell phones, laptops, automobiles, gaming consoles & desktop computers.
- Of the 10 most popular manufacturers, 6 don't provide access to spare parts or technical service information like a schematic.

“With 4.3 million unique visitors from New York using iFixit, it’s clear that New Yorkers just want to fix their stuff. New Yorkers know that repair cuts waste and saves them money,” said Russ Haven, NYPIRG General Counsel. “But too many of the things we are trying to fix have unnecessary barriers because most of the top manufacturers won’t provide access to spare parts, repair software or service diagrams.”

The report, authored with the U.S. PIRG Education Fund, highlights the growing call for “Right to Repair” reforms, which would require manufacturers to make parts and service information available.

There is pending legislation in Albany, sponsored by Neil Breslin in the Senate, and Donna Lupardo in the Assembly.

Sen. Neil Breslin said: “In many instances, repairs of digital items are intentionally limited by the manufacturer. Manufacturers require consumers to access repair services exclusively through their limited authorized channels that result in inflated, high repair prices, poor service or non-existent service in rural areas and unnecessarily high rates of electronic waste.”

“We all rely on our electronic devices every day, but when they’re broken we have to rely on the companies that made them,” said Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo. “Many repair shops, and consumers, do not lack the skill to repair electronics, they lack the information. Manufacturers often keep diagnostic and repair information private so users are forced to pay them to fix them.

This bill would make this information available, saving consumers money and also cutting down on electronic waste.”

“iFixit.com has many guides for problems that manufacturers have told people are unfixable, and that they need to replace the device—for example, you can easily change the battery in an iPhone yourself,” explained iFixit’s co-founder, Kyle Wiens. “And while we can provide spare parts for that repair, sometimes, we just can’t get the parts: Only the manufacturer has access to what we need to fix the device.”

The most important repair guides on iFixit among state residents was cell phones, and Apple was the most popular manufacturer. Among personal electronics, battery repair was the most common guide type.

Patrick McClellan, State Policy Director for the New York League of Conservation Voters said, "Consumer products that have a short useful lifetime, sometimes by design, drive both carbon emissions and the growth of an unsustainable waste system. Allowing consumers to repair their own devices is one of the easiest steps New York can take toward a long-term goal of sending zero waste to landfills."

“Throwing out a \$1000 smartphone because it needs a \$40 battery is absurd,” added Haven. “No wonder people are starting to try and fix things themselves instead. But manufacturers need to help us by providing better access to parts and information. And if they won’t, state leaders should step up.”