



# SIERRA CLUB

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

**To: The Michigan State House Agriculture Committee**

**Date: June 6, 2023**

**Re: Support; HB 4673**

Dear Committee Chair Miller and the rest of the members of the House Agriculture Committee:

On behalf of our 150,000 Sierra Club members and supporters in Michigan, we support HB 4673, the Right to Repair bill, under consideration by this committee. In speaking with partners around the state about our support for this legislation the first question that we've gotten is, "is this really your lane - we didn't realize Sierra Club has an opinion about farm equipment?" Based on this reaction my assumption is that a few committee members may be thinking the same thing. Thank you for this opportunity to share with you why Sierra Club does indeed have an opinion about whether or not farmers and other independent repair providers can repair their own farm equipment without having to rely on the original manufacturer.

Yes, we care about the financial viability of farming as a sector, and this bill will help farmers in Michigan to save both time and thousands of dollars in repair costs.<sup>1</sup> However, the alignment with HB 4673 and Sierra Club's policy priorities is one of economic structure and waste—Right to Repair is a movement that includes the right to repair farm equipment and extends to other sectors as well.

Since the 1920s, when lightbulb manufacturers teamed up to purposefully limit the life spans of their products, companies have been locked into a linear business model rooted in the concept of planned obsolescence.<sup>2</sup> To "grow" under linear economic models, we must sell more stuff every year. After around 100 years of operating under this ecologically destructive economic system we are facing catastrophic climate change, a plastics crisis, ever-cheaper products made from low-quality toxic materials, and a race to the bottom for wages and working conditions across the globe. Planned obsolescence has a huge carbon footprint.

Planned obsolescence is why we see software mysteriously slow down, furniture designed with hollow legs and cheap staples, and clothing burned because it can't sell fast enough.<sup>3</sup> As repair shops close, landfills expand, leaving a toxic legacy as they contaminate groundwater and soil, and release methane into our rapidly warming atmosphere.

Access to parts, manuals, and diagnostic software will keep equipment in use by incentivizing repair over replacement. We must prioritize repair over replacement to address the ecologically

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<sup>1</sup> Bedayn, Jesse (2023). 11 States Consider Right to Repair for Farm Equipment. AP News. Retrieved from: <https://apnews.com/article/farm-equipment-repairs-d5ea466725328d965a85a62130503d49>

<sup>2</sup> Rivera, J. L., & Lallmahomed, A. (2016). Environmental implications of planned obsolescence and product lifetime: a literature review. *International Journal of Sustainable Engineering*, 9(2), 119-129.

<sup>3</sup> Baraniuk, Chris. (2018). BBC Earth. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbcearth.com/news/will-fashion-firms-stop-burning-clothes>

illiterate impetus for industries to “externalize” pollution to maximize profits. We must design and build for durability, longevity, and repair, and Right to Repair bills encourage manufacturers to make good products that last.<sup>4</sup> One of the best effects of these kinds of policies are dramatic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from the manufacturing and waste sectors.<sup>5</sup>

HB 4673 is a step towards acknowledging that our economy exists within our ecosystem, not outside of it. We commend the bill sponsors for taking up this important legislation.

Christy McGillivray  
Legislative and Political Director  
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter

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<sup>4</sup> Klosowki, Thorin (2021). What You Should Know about Right to Repair. New York Times. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/what-is-right-to-repair/>

<sup>5</sup> Perzanowski, A. (2022). *The Right to Repair: Reclaiming the Things We Own*. Cambridge University Press.