

Alaska State Senate

Senator Forrest Dunbar

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SPONSOR STATEMENT – VERSION O

SB 111: DIGITAL PRODUCT REPAIR

"An Act relating to the diagnosis, maintenance, and repair of consumer products that use digital electronics to operate; adding an unlawful act to the Alaska Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act; and providing for an effective date."

Over the last several decades it has become increasingly difficult to repair common consumer products. The decline of repairability is not because of technical problems arising from alleged inherent complexity of modern products; it is a choice made by manufacturers to exert control and extract profit beyond the initial sale. Senate Bill 111 will give Alaskans access to the information, tools, and parts required to repair our equipment in this digitized world.

Manufacturers have made it difficult to impossible for owners or independent service providers to repair their devices. They refuse to publish repair documentation, glue parts together, and require proprietary tools (including software tools), among other practices. They leverage their artificial monopoly to charge exorbitant prices for official repairs. The problem is exacerbated in Alaska, where official repair avenues are even less accessible and more expensive than in the Lower 48, and sometimes aren't available at all.

Alaskans have a strong tradition of self-sufficiency and improvisation. We like to make things work, and in remote areas we need to make things work. By preventing consumers and independent technicians from conducting repairs, manufacturers push people to replace rather than repair. This is a financial burden on consumers, and it is especially harmful in Alaska. Many rural residents live on a very small cash income, and shipping is extremely expensive. In remote areas getting a replacement might take months, and sending a large device off for official repair is simply not viable. SB 111 will give owners and independent service providers materials they need to maintain and fix equipment.

SB 111 will allow Alaskans to extend the life of their digital products, reducing unnecessary waste that often can't be properly processed in Alaska. It will make documentation, tools, and parts available at fair prices, fostering a competitive marketplace of small independent repair businesses. I strongly urge you to support SB 111 to save Alaskans money and time, reduce waste, and keep business in-state.