



1812 N. Moore Street, Suite 2200
Arlington, VA 22209

703.841.3200

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Testimony of Mark Ourada
Director, State Government Affairs
National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA)

Before the House Committee on Corporations

In Opposition to HB7180:
Right to Repair Legislation

Chair Solomon and Committee members —

I am Mark Ourada, Director of Government Affairs for the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA).

NEMA represents the interests of over 300 leading manufacturers in the *Electroindustry* supporting more than 2.2 million American workers, generating more than \$197.39 billion in labor income annually! In Rhode Island, the electroindustry supports more than 8,700 jobs with labor income exceeding \$735 million.

A major part of NEMA's work is to provide policy leadership and market intelligence—along with setting standards for the safe, efficient, and innovative electrical products and systems our member companies create that are making the future electric for our homes, workplaces, schools, and healthcare facilities. NEMA does not manufacture products or advocate specific chemical uses but rather works to ensure policy is grounded in fact-based risk, actual exposure, and sound science.

With over 50 product lines—including batteries, lighting, the electric grid, EV products, cybersecurity, and more—NEMA member products are essential to daily life and public safety.

On behalf of the hundreds of manufacturers and businesses our association represents, we respectfully oppose HB7180 in its current form.

SCOPE OF LEGISLATION:

Almost all Right-to-Repair bills across the country are aimed at what we would term 'consumer electronic products' ensuring that individuals are able to repair phones, computers, and other personal electronic devices.

If that is the author's intention for this bill, it would be extremely helpful, and appropriate, to be clear that this legislation is *not* intended to affect business-to-business or business-to-government transactions.

These transactions are significantly different, and the people/companies involved have greater experience and knowledge in safely and appropriately dealing with repair issues.

LIGHTING ISSUES:

NEMA has a number of companies that manufacture lighting components. HB7180 does not specifically address this area, but we believe all lighting products should be exempt from R2R laws because it is unsafe for any untrained person to repair *any* electrical equipment, especially products the manufacturer has intended not to be repairable.

By using the overly broad definition "digital electronic equipment" this legislation *unintentionally* puts consumer products, like smart light bulbs and lighting equipment, within its scope.

There is a strong precedent set by the National Electrical Code (NEC) against repairability of lighting products stating that "Reconditioned luminaires, lamp holders, ballasts, LED drivers, lamps, and retrofit kits— shall not be permitted."

This issue can be easily remedied by inserting on page three after line sixty-six insert (F) **light bulbs, lighting equipment, and systems not including component parts that are not meant to be repairable but just replaceable.**

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES:

Today, with software (i.e., firmware) imbedded in so many products, this legislation puts at risk the intellectual property that NEMA member companies develop at substantial cost.

Protecting proprietary intellectual property is a priority for OEMs. Companies spend multiple years and significant amounts of money and labor to innovate, develop and manufacture products.

NEMA is suggesting language that would prevent *indirect* disclosure of trade secrets through access to firmware, encryption keys, diagnostic tools, or similar mechanisms by inserting on page 9 line 243 or **provide any means by which a trade secret could be ascertained or indirectly disclosed.**

INDEPENDENT PROVIDER ISSUES:

HB301 would require original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to provide independent repair-providers with diagnostic and repair information, software, tools, and parts—but without requiring any of the critical consumer protections (such as training and competency certification) that authorized repair networks provide.

Manufacturers offer authorized repair networks to provide consumers with the assurance that their products are serviced by trained and vetted repair professionals who have the necessary skills to repair electronic products safely, reliably, and accurately.

Without proper vetting of repair providers and of the repair process, the potential for consumer harm is significant. It also undermines the innovations manufacturers have developed to protect customers, as well as the protection of their repair-related intellectual property.

When an electronic product breaks, consumers have a variety of professional repair options, including using an OEM's authorized repair network, which often includes local repair service providers as well as mail-in, and even in-house, repair options for some categories of products. Consumers may also choose to use one of the many independent repair providers, although they do so without the quality assurance provided by using a manufacturer's authorized network repair provider. The free-market economy provides a wide range of consumer choices for repair with varying levels of quality, price, and convenience without the mandates imposed by the legislation.

CONCLUSION:

As a former legislator, I understand the challenges you face in balancing various interests and avoiding unintended consequences, so I thank you for your time and attention. Our members take these issues very seriously. Thus, as a regular course of business they have taken, and continue to take measures to ensure consumers have both options *and* qualified individuals to repair their products.

NEMA is committed to working with you to ensure consumers have access to repairs and ensure that their privacy, safety, and security are protected. For the reasons outlined in this

testimony, NEMA is in opposition to HB7180 in its current form and encourages the committee to take a careful look at the suggestions we have made to amend the current language.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Mark Ourada
Director, State Government Affairs
The National Electrical Manufacturers Association