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Chairwoman Nydia M. Velázquez  
Committee on Small Business  
2302 Rayburn HOB

Ranking Member Blaine Luetkemeyer  
Committee on Small Business  
2230 Rayburn HOB

Chairman Jared Golden  
Subcommittee on Underserved, Agricultural, and Rural Business Development  
222 Longworth HOB

Ranking Member Claudia Tenney  
Subcommittee on Underserved, Agricultural, and Rural Business Development  
1410 Longworth HOB

Dear Chairs, Rankers and Members of the Subcommittee on Underserved, Agricultural and Rural Business Development,

Below, you will find my biography and testimony that I will be verbally summarizing at the upcoming hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony and expertise on this important topic.

## **Bio**

My name is Brian Clark. Since the fall of 2012, I have been the co-owner of a small independent consumer electronics repair shop located in Conway, New Hampshire called The iGuys' Tech Shop. The founding of the business came from recognizing the need for repair services on increasingly popular electronic devices in a region of New Hampshire that, at the time, had no options to speak of.

Prior to becoming a small business owner and entrepreneur, I earned my degree in Meteorology from The Pennsylvania State University and worked in the field for about 6 years.

## **About Us**

My shop specializes in repair of all smartphones and tablets from any manufacturer, as well as Apple branded computers. We also provide data recovery and microsoldering services for these devices. The town of Conway lies in a rural portion of New Hampshire, in the heart of the White Mountains which is a very popular tourist destination. The permanent population of the area that we serve is somewhere around 100,000 people based on 2020 census data, covering a large area at over 1,000 square miles.

## **About Authorized Repair**

As an independent shop, we have no affiliation with any manufacturer. Even with industry changes over the last decade that we have existed, we still find that it is best for our business and more importantly for our customers to remain independent. Any paths to becoming an authorized repair facility are far from ideal and are generally incredibly invasive to our business. Of course, there are drawbacks to our choice, as most manufacturers continue to offer independent shops little to no official access to genuine parts, repair manuals, tools, or schematics.

Manufacturers want their devices be serviced solely by their authorized repair options. For Apple devices, the nearest authorized repair facility, in this case an Apple Authorized Service Provider or AASP, is about 45 minutes from our shop. The nearest Apple Store is about 1 hour, 15 minutes away. For Samsung devices, the closest authorized repair facility is about 1 hour, 30 minutes away. The same for Google Pixel devices. Have a device from another manufacturer such as Motorola or LG? You're completely out of luck for any brick and mortar authorized repair, making mail-in repair your only official option.

Because New Hampshire becomes increasingly rural as you go north, all of these authorized repair options are located in the more densely populated southern parts of the state. This means that most of our customers would need to drive an additional 45 to 90 minutes, after already frequently driving over an hour to reach us.

Authorized repair facilities are often severely limited by the manufacturer as to what devices are “supported” for repair. Even for these supported devices, frequently only a certain number of repairs on the supported devices are allowed to be completed. To continue to make matters worse, supported repairs on supported devices often require absurd turn around times.

All of these policies and procedures are incredibly unfriendly and unfair to consumers, especially those that live in rural areas, and are designed to push people to replace rather than repair. It is important to understand that this situation is far from unique to northern New Hampshire. There are countless locations around the country where similar, or worse, situations can be encountered.

### **Real World Examples**

Over the decade that we have been in business, we have seen countless scenarios repeat and replay themselves over and over again for our customers. I’d like to take a moment to provide four examples of common scenarios that we see as an independent repair shop in a rural area.

#### **Example #1**

A local woman relies heavily on her MacBook Air for work. Since COVID, she primarily works from home and her computer is the crucial tool that allows her to do this. One morning, she goes to boot it up to start her work for the day and it simply won’t turn on. She calls Apple technical support and they walk her through a few basic troubleshooting steps to no avail. Apple tells her she will have to either mail it to Apple or bring it to an authorized service provider to have the computer diagnosed and repaired. They don’t even tell her about our shop because Apple does not see independent repair as a viable option. Mailing her computer to Apple will take too long. She also lives nearly an hour north of our shop, so she’s nearly 2 hours from the nearest AASP. Thinking there must be someone local that can help her and feeling rather desperate, she creates a post on social media and is referred to us by multiple people. We had her computer diagnosed and repaired within 1 to 2 days of drop-off. Any Apple authorized repair options would have likely taken weeks.

### Example #2

A family drives up from Boston for a week of vacation in the mountains. On the way, one of the children in the family drops his iPad, cracking the glass front. This iPad is very important to the young man and to the family as a whole. They too call Apple and are told that they can mail it in, or take it to an Apple Store to have the tablet replaced for several hundred dollars. This represents only a slightly reduced cost from replacing with a new one. This is due to the fact that Apple simply does not offer to repair a cracked iPad display, period. Thankfully, some Google searching leads the family to find our shop, where we do offer that service. Within a day, we have the cracked glass replaced at a very economical cost and the family can carry on with their vacation.

### Example #3

A local plumber effectively runs his business from his iPhone. He no longer has a landline, and as such, his sole method of keeping in touch with his customers is his iPhone. One afternoon, he plugs his iPhone 12 into the charger in his work van as he has done many times before. Shortly after plugging it in, the phone gets noticeably hot, the screen goes black, and now the device shows no signs of life whatsoever. He heads to the local Verizon store since that's where he bought the phone just over a year ago. He is told the phone is out of warranty, and as such his only option is pay off the remainder of the amount of money he owes for the phone (several hundred dollars) and replace with a new one. This is not an ideal option for the plumber as 1) he really doesn't have the funds available at the moment to pay off the phone and 2) he has important business related data on his iPhone 12 that he had not had a chance to backup. Thankfully, after expressing this to the Verizon store employee, he is pointed to our shop. We are able to set him up with a loaner phone so that he can immediately be in touch with his customers while we service his device. Within a couple days, we complete a microsoldering repair of the motherboard of his phone that both gets the phone back up and running at a fraction of the cost of replacement, and also gets the plumber his valuable business data.

### Example #4

An elderly woman has a basic Samsung smartphone that she has owned for 4 to 5 years. She only uses it occasionally to make some phone calls, send and receive text message, and to generally keep in touch with her family. Though the phone is basic, it does what she needs it to do. It took her a lot of time and a great deal of effort to get it setup and learn how to use the basic functions. After having the phone for this long,

she is finding the battery life is extremely poor, with the phone turning off within 15 minutes of unplugging from a charger. She contacts Samsung, and is told that her phone is no longer supported and as such they do not offer battery replacement services any longer. She looks at the possibility of replacing the battery herself, but finds that the process looks to be far too complicated for her to attempt. Thankfully, a friend refers her to us. Though Samsung does not give us access to genuine batteries for older devices, we do have access to reasonable quality aftermarket batteries and as such are able to replace the battery in her phone and save her the cost and headaches associated with replacing her phone.

### **Summary**

The presence of reliable independent consumer electronics repair in rural areas is crucial for the quality of life of the residents, as well as the economy of these areas. Despite this clear importance, manufacturers continue to ignore the need and make it difficult for businesses like mine to operate. Independent repair is ready, willing, and able to fill the void that major manufacturers have left, particularly in these rural areas. All we ask is that manufactures give us reasonable, paid access to the parts, tools, and documentation to continue to offer these services for years to come.