US lawmakers push for universal chargers for smartphones, mobile devices

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A trio of U.S. senators is urging support for a universal charging standard for smartphones and mobile devices after the European Union recently agreed on new rules.

In a letter sent Thursday to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Senators Edward J. Markey and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, and Bernie Sanders of Vermont press for a plan to tackle the lack of a universal charger, which they say creates a financial burden for consumers and creates more electronic waste.

"We cannot allow the consumer electronics industry to prioritize proprietary and inevitably obsolete charging technology over consumer protection and environmental health," reads an excerpt from the letter.

The senators did not specify the type of charging standard Commerce officials should consider as part of the plan.

Lawmakers cite money spent by consumers on various chargers for different products and waste created when obsolete chargers are tossed out as reasons for pushing to require a universal standard.

Last week, the EU agreed to rules which will take effect by fall 2024, which would allow consumers to only use a USB Type-C cable to recharge small and medium-sized portable electronics.

The rules cover smartphones, tablets, earbuds, headphones and portable speakers, among others.

More devices have shifted to USB-C to recharge, but one of the most popular portable devices, the iPhone, still uses Apple's exclusive Lightning connector to recharge. The standard is also used on iPads and AirPods.

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