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February 12, 2020

The Honorable Dereck E Davis
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
Room 231
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 999 entitled "Member-Regulated Cooperatives-Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)"

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Commissioners for Somerset County wish to express their support for House Bill 999 entitled **Member-Regulated Cooperatives-Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)**, which will address our County's dire local need for reliable internet access from a very trusted and local utility partner, Choptank Electric Cooperative.

Somerset County's rural population has long endured inadequate internet service. In today's society, suitable internet access is not just a need; it has become a necessity. We hear far too often from many of our constituents that they would like better internet options in our rural communities, and we believe that Choptank Electric Cooperative will have the means that can directly implement this much-needed service to our constituents who reside in Choptank's Eastern Shore service area.

The passage of this bill will place Choptank Electric Cooperative on the same regulatory playing field as over 680 cooperatives around the country, including Delaware. It will also ensure the next generation of rural communities the ability to access the internet.

Therefore, we respectfully ask for your favorable report for House Bill 999.

Sincerely,

Ralph D. Taylor
County Administrator