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SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

21863-1195

December 17, 2019

Senate Delegation for the Eastern Shore
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

House Delegation for the Eastern Shore
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Honorable Senator Mary Beth Carozza
314 James Senate Office Building

Honorable Senator Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.
420 James Senate Office Building

Honorable Senator Adelaide C. Eckardt
322 James Senate Office Building

Honorable Delegate Charles J. Otto
321 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Wayne A. Hartman
308 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Christopher T. Adams
426 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes
427 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Johnny Mautz
424 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Carl Anderton, Jr.
310 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Steven J. Arentz
308 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Jefferson L. Ghrist
430 House Office Building

Honorable Delegate Jay A. Jacobs
321 House Office Building

RE: Support Choptank Electric Cooperative Broadband Initiative – The Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020

Dear Distinguished Senators and Delegates Representing the Eastern Shore:

The Worcester County Commissioners support Choptank Electric Cooperative's broadband initiative – The Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020. This bill will address our local need for internet access with a solution provided by a local member-regulated partner, Choptank Electric Cooperative.

Citizens and Government Working Together

Worcester County is home to over 50,000 residents, many of whom live in rural areas and do not have access to reliable high speed internet. Through the Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020, Choptank Electric Cooperative will be able to leverage existing assets for the economic-of-scale necessary to provide high speed fiber internet to residents and businesses in underserved areas of our County.

As a member-regulated Cooperative, Choptank Electric's democratically-elected Board will directly implement policies and services requested by the member-owners of the cooperative. This will allow Choptank Electric to eliminate duplicative regulatory costs and strengthen member engagement, all while providing transparency and accountability. This will allow economically-efficient broadband deployment across Choptank's Eastern Shore service area.

In Worcester County, access to reliable high speed internet is vital for our students to complete school assignments in the comfort of their own home. Reliable high speed internet is important for economic diversity, attracting new, technology-driven companies to our region. Internet access is the great equalizer – enabling virtual workforce, distance learning, telemedicine, precision agriculture, and economic opportunity throughout our County. Electric cooperatives were established over 80-years ago to bring electricity to Rural America. Here in Worcester County we see the need, again, for our cooperative to fill the void that is the “digital divide”.

This bill will put Choptank Electric Cooperative on the same regulatory playing field as over 680 electric cooperatives across the country, including Delaware. The bill will ensure the next generation of rural communities the ability to access the internet. On behalf of the citizens of Worcester County, we urge you to support The Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020 and Choptank Electric's commitment to serving and improving the quality of life of its community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Mitrecic', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph M. Mitrecic
President

cc: Governor Larry Hogan
Kathryn Gordon, Economic Development Director
Brian Jones, Information Technology Director
John Tustin, Public Works Director
Ed Tudor, Development Review & Permitting Director
Phil Thompson, Finance Officer