

COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

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COUNTY ATTORNEY

March 3, 2020

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

RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 999 Entitled "Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020"

Dear Delegate Davis, Chair and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Dorchester County Council, I respectfully offer its support for House Bill 999 entitled "Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020" which establishes a process for a cooperative to operate as a member-regulated cooperative in order to be able to provide economically efficient broadband internet service.

Choptank Electric Cooperative, a not-for-profit corporation, serves a nine County region, including Dorchester County, which equates to 3% of its electric users. This region has lacked broadband access for over a decade. The passage of this Act will provide its members the ability to control the use of its assets, including existing infrastructure and staff, to provide long awaited broadband access.

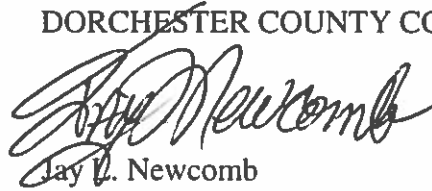
Many residents in Dorchester County are underserved or do not have internet access. Therefore, they are unable to: 1) view their utility and other accounts online and pay bills; 2) purchase groceries and other items; 3) manage their health care needs; 4) take advantage of educational and employment opportunities many of which are only available with broadband access; and 5) obtain access to specialized health care by means of telecommunications technology. Students are also negatively impacted, particularly those in the more rural areas, as they are unable to utilize Power School to obtain their assignments online or conduct research to assist with their school work. Another disadvantage is the potential impact the lack of high speed internet access will have on the growth of the County as it provides individuals, families and business owners the opportunity to learn about Dorchester County and hopefully relocate to their area.

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We ask that you look favorably upon House Bill 999. Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter of support. Please contact the Council's Office at (410) 228-1700 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

DORCHESTER COUNTY COUNCIL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay V. Newcomb", written in a cursive style.

Jay V. Newcomb
President

jln/dl

cc: The Honorable Adelaide Eckardt, Senator
The Honorable Christopher T. Adams, Delegate
The Honorable Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate
The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Delegate