



ESMEC

Serving the Public County School Systems of
Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent
Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester

Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium

March 5, 2020

The Honorable Dereck E. Davis
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
Maryland General Assembly
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street, Room 231
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Davis,

On behalf of the Eastern Shore Superintendents of Schools, I am writing in support of the "Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020" (House Bill 999/Senate Bill 540).

To be successful in school and graduate college and career ready, our students need access to high-speed internet.

On the Shore, we have a digital divide of homes with or without high-speed internet. The digital divide directly impacts the ability of our students to succeed. In many areas of the Eastern Shore, our students do not have access to high-speed internet. As school systems, we have implemented several technical solutions to strive to provide high-speed internet to our students living in remote areas. However, these solutions are expensive and lack reliability. For many of our students, high-speed internet is only available at school or public libraries. The initiative proposed by Choptank Electric Cooperative will provide a pathway for our students to have access to high speed internet.

As rural school systems, we serve approximately 65,000 students attending 129 schools. Some of our students live in municipalities with access to high-speed internet. However, many of our students live in remote areas with no access to high speed internet. We believe that access to high speed internet is critical to the success of our students. We are in full support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. John B. Gaddis, President
Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium
Superintendent, Somerset County Public Schools

PC: Eastern Shore Superintendents
Dr. Jon M. Andes, Executive Director, ESMEC