CAROLINE COUNTY
you belong here
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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February 27, 2020

Delegate Dereck E. Davis
Room 231
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 999, Member-Regulated Cooperatives- Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)

Caroline County Economic Development **SUPPORTS** HB 999, *Member-Regulated Cooperatives - Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020).* This bill will address our local businesses need for internet access with a solution provided by a trusted, local partner, Choptank Electric Cooperative.

Caroline County is home to nearly 700 establishments of all sizes that provide jobs and investment into the community. Many do not have access to reliable high speed internet. Through the ***Member-Regulated Cooperatives - Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020),*** Choptank Electric Cooperative will be able to leverage existing assets for the **economics-of-scale** necessary to provide high speed fiber internet to 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 the while providing transparency and accountability. This will allow economically efficient broadband deployment across Choptank's Eastern Shore service area.

This bill will put Choptank Electric Cooperative on the same regulatory playing field as over 680 electric cooperatives across the country, including Delaware, an economic development competitor for Caroline County and Maryland. The bill will ensure the next generation of rural communities the ability to access the internet. We urge you to support HB999 to allow Choptank Electric Cooperative to deliver Broadband internet service quickly and efficiently.

Debbie Bowden

Debbie Bowden
Director