

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and Committee Members

Again my name is Jack Wilson, I am the Vice President of the Queen Annes County Board of Commissioners, MaCo Rural County Chairman, Business owner and a 28 year satisfied member of the Choptank Electric Cooperative. I am here today to support House Bill 999. I represent the largest District in terms of area in QAC which includes demographics ranging from small towns and neighborhoods to one of the largest Agricultural areas on the Eastern Shore. My focus will be focus on QAC but they could easily be applied to the other 8 Counties served by Choptank. Since becoming Commissioner over 4 years ago I have made Broadband connectivity one of my major focuses. As you can imagine it is quite challenging to come up with cost effective and reliable solutions. To that end QAC has been very proactive in looking for solutions, we have formed a Broadband Advisory Commission which has worked with a dozen different vendors and providers to research all solutions that may be available. We have commissioned a feasibility study to look at and exhaust all possible ways to deploy Broadband in our unserved and underserved areas. During the study process the proposal you are hearing today was presented and is recognized as a great move forward to eliminate roughly 85% of the unserved areas in North County. I would like to touch on four of

the challenges faced without adequate Broadband opportunities.

1. Education- With changes coming in the form of the Kirwan recommendations, it will become increasingly important to have Broadband connectivity at home, so students can take advantage of the tablets being provided as a part of an ongoing Technology plan for our schools. One of Kirwan's main goals is to provide equity in education opportunities for all kids regardless of zip code. Broadband will be a key component to meeting this goal.
2. Agriculture- Our largest and oldest industry in QAC is Agriculture. Today the Ag industry relies heavily on technology to perform all facets of farming including planting, fertilizing, animal feeding and watering and livestock monitoring. All of these require connectivity for software updates and functionality. One highlight of increased technology is that over fertilization can be avoided by providing exact measurements per acre for disbursement of product which ultimately reduces nutrient runoff. Also animal feeding and animal feed supplies are

controlled electronically. Two benefits of this are one only having delivered what you need when you need it thus cutting down on wasted feed and costs, and two having less trips from feed haulers thus helping reduce the Carbon footprint. The USDA recently released a statement concerning the future increase in the need for farmer's production and the need for the farmers to use technology to achieve these goals. Broadband will be vital in making this happen.

3. Economic Development- I believe we all are aware that Broadband is essential for Business growth and prosperity in this day and age. It is no longer a luxury but a necessity. To that end having Broadband in our most rural areas will foster new businesses as well as support existing ones that struggle with connectivity now. It will also open up opportunities for people to telework which in the case of QAC with some of our well-publicized traffic issues should allow a reduction in commuter traffic.
4. Telemedicine- As one of 2 Counties in the state without a freestanding hospital we have been told by our County Health Officer what a benefit it would be for increased connectivity to expand the use of

Telemedicine and help to curb some of the pressure on our Emergency Services and provide a recognized savings to Healthcare, not to mention the tremendous convenience provided by the service.

In closing I would just like to say that I believe Choptank provides an excellent opportunity for the Eastern shore to get a much needed utility just as the Coops did 80 years ago when they deployed Electric to our rural areas. Thank you for your time and I hope you find in favor of House Bill 999.

Thank You,
Jack Wilson
QAC Commissioner 1st District