



DORCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

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February 20, 2020

Senate Finance Committee
House Economic Matters Committee

Re: SB540/HB999 Member-Regulated Cooperatives - Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)

Dear Senators and Delegates:

This letter is being sent on behalf of the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee and Board of Directors. We are in full support of Choptank Electric Cooperative's efforts to expand their services to include broadband services under Senate Bill 540 and House Bill 999

We understand and support their need to become "member regulated" but would like the committees to consider a slight amendment to the Bill. Today Choptank Electric Cooperative, through the Maryland Broadband Cooperative provides access to portions of existing and new middle mile fiber they own. We have residents and members of our Chamber that depend on the existing arrangements to receive broadband. We would like the Bill to include a provision that by law this practice continues as it will be critical to maintaining existing services as well as helping to reach all remote areas, including those not served by Choptank Electric Cooperative. We are confident they plan to continue to continue those efforts but once no longer regulated, they could choose to no longer participate in those critical resource sharing and lease arrangements through the Maryland Broadband Cooperative.

We greatly appreciate the collaborative manner in which Choptank Electric Cooperative has operated and expect they will continue to be a great community partner. This recommendation is in no way expressing a concern with the current Board or Leadership. It is just a small change to help ensure progress being made by the Maryland Broadband Cooperative continues into the future.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to reach out to us. If there is additional action you need from the Chamber, please let us know.

Sincerely,

William Christopher, President/CEO