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Maryland House of Delegates

I live in Travelers Rest, just off St. Michaels Road in Easton and am a highly satisfied customer of Choptank Electric since moving here in 2011. We do not have access to broadband and approval of HB999 will give us a better chance at getting it sooner, rather than later.

Travelers Rest is not what would be considered "last mile." Broadband runs down the road past our subdivision and has been provided to all the subdivisions around ours. The situation appears to be that there are few providers, and no one wants to spend the money to bring it to our homes. I support this bill to increase providers, and I respectfully ask that Maryland do everything in its power to provide local communities with the funds to bring high speed internet to all its citizens.

It's important to understand what we face every day. Other than satellite TV, access to internet is via cell or satellite TV, both of which are expensive and slow. To make things worse, cell service in our area is spotty, so it can be unreliable. We have over the years tried multiple ways to get internet access. Air cards, a Verizon router, and paying for another cell phone line and using a phone as a hotspot. Satellite TV was slow and expensive. A hotspot does not allow phone calls while using it for internet, so one cannot participate in a video conference and talk over the phone. The latest option is something called MoFi. One of my neighbors just paid \$3000 to have it installed to get faster, unlimited data via cell.

Those of us who have tried to run a business out of our home or telecommute, have experienced a myriad of frustrations: slow downloads, frozen video during video conferences and dropped calls. Neighbors with children have to take them to places like McDonalds and the library in order to do their homework, and those working with online degree programs must do the same. Nurses and other professionals required maintain licenses through online courses must go to places offering free, high speed Internet access.

When we have visitors our cell bill has been as high as \$300 per month. We now ask that visitors do not stream, and we limit their internet access. As a result, we have family members reticent to visit because of the internet situation. As you know, everyone relies on digital devices and when our visitors become aware of our situation, it looks like a joke.

A year ago, my husband and I held a neighborhood meeting to discuss lack of access to highspeed internet, featuring one of our county council members. He told us some 25% of homes in Talbot do not have access and we were astounded. But when he showed us a map of

Talbot County and we saw that all the homes around our subdivision have access, we saw a different picture that caused a lot of anger. Why doesn't Travelers Rest have the same access as others around us? This is where Choptank could provide a solution if it has approval.

As I understand the situation, the county would like to work with Easton Utilities, but they would have to install infrastructure at significant expense. Choptank owns our infrastructure and to give them the ability to install cable, we would have a better chance to get service. HB999 will give Choptank the ability to provide its customers with broadband.

We also heard the county applied for a grant but didn't get it. And no one wants to raise taxes. So, in addition to the bill before you, the State needs also to provide financial assistance.

Without tools and funding, Maryland's citizens will not be able to compete.

Thank you for this privilege,

Respectfully,

Pamela Keeton