



February 19, 2020

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

Caroline County is home to over 30,000 residents, many of whom live in rural areas and do not have access to reliable high speed internet. Through the **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 residents and 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.

In Caroline County.....

*The Caroline County Chamber of Commerce understands that their members and every Caroline County business deserves affordable access to reliable high-speed internet in order to compete with other businesses in Maryland and beyond. We support Choptank Electric Cooperative's efforts to become a member regulated utility.*

Electric cooperatives were established over 80-years ago to bring electricity to the Rural America. Here in Caroline County and throughout the Eastern Shore we see the need, again, for our cooperative to fill the void that is the "**digital divide**". Internet access is the great equalizer - enabling virtual workforce, distance learning, telemedicine, precision agriculture, and economic opportunity throughout our county.

This bill will put Choptank Electric Cooperative on the same regulatory playing field as over 680 electric cooperatives across the country, including Delaware. The bill will ensure the next generation of rural communities the ability to access the internet. We urge you to support HB 999 and allow Choptank Electric Cooperative to deliver Broadband internet service quickly and efficiently.

Sincerely,

Tracey Snyder

Tracey Snyder  
Executive Director  
Caroline County Chamber of Commerce