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DATE: February 24, 2020
COMMITTEE: House Economic Matters
Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair
231 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

BILL TITLE: **HB 999 Member-Regulated Cooperatives—Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)**

RE: Letter of Support

I am a life-long resident of Maryland’s Eastern Shore, having lived at some point in Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester Counties. I have also been an educator for the past 44 years at the two regional community colleges that serve the eight counties of the Shore—Chesapeake and Wor-Wic, and have served as president of Wor-Wic Community College since 2000. Furthermore, I chaired the Tri-County Council sponsored *Regional Vision for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland* community blueprint for the future, where last-mile broadband service was cited as a critical success requirement for our region. Through my experiences, I have a very keen sense of the vital need for last-mile broadband service on the Shore.

This bill will allow Choptank Electric to deliver last-mile fiber-to-the-home at gigabit speed to their members across the Eastern Shore, including the most rural areas. While this will not reach every home, it will dramatically improve broadband service, which is critical to the success of residents in our communities.

Every course we offer has a required on-line component. Many of our students do not have access to broadband and have to leave their homes, in many cases traveling some distance to the college, in order to conduct on line research, participate in on line discussions and complete homework assignments. Educational opportunities are lost to individuals who, due to scheduling conflicts, could otherwise take courses and earn college degrees on line, but can’t due to the lack of high-speed internet service in their homes.

Choptank already has fiber-to-the-home to support electric service. Taking advantage of the fiber that is already there seems to be a very sensible and low-cost solution to a serious short coming in our rural communities.

I support any initiative that will reduce the inequity caused by the lack of broadband service to Maryland’s rural population. This bill will address a critical need.

Sincerely,

Dr. Murray K. Hoy, Esq.

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