

**Somerset County
Economic Development Commission**

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Chairwoman Delores G. Kelley
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony in support of SB 540, Member-Regulated Cooperatives – Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)

Chairwoman Kelley,

On behalf of the Somerset County Economic Development Commission (EDC), I would like to submit this letter encouraging your support for Choptank Electric Cooperative's initiative to assist in bringing high speed internet / broadband service to rural Somerset County, Maryland.

The installation and access to broadband service will help support many industries in the area such as health care, educational facilities, aerospace industry, as well as the governmental operations in the County, who are all in desperate need of assistance to enhance their broadband availability and better access in the community.

As a rural county in the State of Maryland, we are very eager to have affordable and reliable broadband service for our local businesses and residents. It is increasingly clear that future economic growth and job creation will depend on having the necessary infrastructure in place to assist with business attraction and future job creation efforts. Through the **Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020**, Choptank Electric Cooperative will be able to leverage existing assets for the **economies-of-scale** necessary to provide high speed fiber internet to residents and businesses in underserved areas of our county. This bill would permit Choptank Electric Cooperative the same regulatory environment as the other electric cooperatives across the country, including Delaware and ensure the next generation of rural communities the ability to access the internet.

Somerset County stands ready to work together in bringing high speed fiber / broadband internet service to the County and we urge you to support Choptank Electric Cooperative's efforts to deliver this service quickly and efficiently. We look forward to working with you on this endeavor. We certainly appreciate your consideration and support to Somerset County and Choptank Electric Cooperative.

Sincerely,

Daniel K. Thompson
Executive Director

