

COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

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December 30, 2019

The Honorable Adelaide C. Eckardt, Senator
601 Locust Street, Suite 202
Cambridge, Maryland 21613

The Honorable Christopher T. Adams, Delegate
326 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Delegate
323 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate
221 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Eckardt and Delegates Adams, Mautz and Sample-Hughes:

On behalf of the Dorchester County Council I am writing in support of the Rural Broadband for Eastern Shore Act of 2020 which will be introduced by the Eastern Shore Delegation.

Choptank Electric Cooperative (CEC) serves a nine County region, including Dorchester County, which equates to 3% of the electric users in Maryland. This region has lacked broadband access for over a decade. The passage of the Act will give members of CEC, a not-for-profit corporation, the ability to control the use of its assets, including existing infrastructure and staff, to provide long awaited broadband access.

Many residents in Dorchester County are underserved or do not have internet service. This is troubling since such access is vital. Without internet service residents are unable to access their utility and other accounts online to keep track of expenses, pay bills, purchase groceries and other items. Likewise, they cannot manage their health care needs including enrolling in a health care plan, scheduling appointments, ordering medications and obtaining their medical records. Access to specialized health care can also be obtained through the remote diagnosis and treatment by means of telecommunications technology. There are also many educational and employment opportunities for residents that are accessible through the internet, some of which are only available with broadband access.

Broadband access is also essential for parents and their students who attend public schools in Dorchester County. Parents are able to view their children's grades, assignments, and attendance

history through the use of Power School from home. Students can access their assignments through this software system and take tests online during school. Additionally, they can use the internet to conduct research as well as access online classes and websites to assist them with their school work. Unfortunately, while students at South Dorchester K-8, a five star school, have internet access at school, the majority of them do not have access at home since that area is underserved. Consequently approximately 80% of those students are not able to enjoy the same benefits as other students in the County.

High speed internet service to Dorchester County is also crucial to its growth. It provides incentives for individuals, families and business owners to relocate to the County which increases property values and the County's tax base. They can search for properties for sale or lease and determine what services are available in the County to suit their individual needs such schools in the area and employment opportunities, including teleworking. Business owners from other areas of the State and country are also able to obtain information on potential business opportunities and locations with broadband access.

In conclusion, broadband access is essential to our residents, employers, the educational and medical systems in the County as well as to its continued growth and prosperity. Therefore, we ask that you support the Rural Broadband for Eastern Shore Act of 2020. Thank you for your consideration of this letter of support. Please contact the Council's Office at (410) 228-1700 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

DORCHESTER COUNTY COUNCIL



Jay L. Newcomb
President

jln/dl

cc: Michael E. Malandro, President & Chief Executive Officer, Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.