

Good Afternoon Madame Chair and Committee Members

Again my name is Jack Wilson, I am the Vice President Of The Queen Annes County Board Of Commissioners, MaCo Board member, Business owner and a 28 year member of the Choptank Electric Cooperative. I am here today to support Senate Bill 540. I represent the largest District in area in QAC which includes a demographics ranging from small towns and neighborhoods to one of the largest Agricultural areas on the Eastern Shore. I will be focusing on QAC with my comments but they could easily be applied to the other 8 Counties served by Choptank. Since becoming Commissioner over 4 years ago I have made Broadband connectivity one of my major focuses. As you can imagine it is quite challenging to come up with cost effective and reliable solutions. To that end QAC has been very proactive in looking for solutions, we have formed a Broadband Advisory Commission which has worked with a dozen different vendors and providers to find possible solutions, one of which was to pay and have a feasibility study done to look at and exhaust all possible ways to deploy Broadband in our unserved and underserved areas. During this process the proposal you are hearing today was presented and is recognized as a great move forward to eliminate roughly 85% of the unserved areas. I want to cover just a few of the challenges faced without adequate Broadband opportunities.

1. Education- With changes coming in the form of the Kirwan recommendations, it will become increasingly important to have Broadband connectivity at home for the students to take advantage of the Chrome books and tablets being provided already as a part of an ongoing Technology plan for our schools. One of Kirwans main goals is to provide equity in education opportunities for all kids regardless of zip code. Broadband will be a key component to meeting this goal.
2. Agriculture- Our largest and oldest industry in QAC is Agriculture. Today the Ag industry relies heavily on technology to perform all facets of farming including planting, fertilizing, animal feeding and watering and livestock monitoring. All of these require connectivity for software updates and monitoring. Examples of the effect of the increased technology are that over fertilization can be avoided by using exact measurements per acre for dispersing on the ground which ultimately reduces nutrient runoff. Also animal feeding and feed supplies are controlled electronically. Two benefits of this are one only having delivered what you need when you need it thus cutting down on wasted feed and costs, and two having less trips from feed haulers as they are only coming out when needed. The USDA released a statement concerning the future increase in the need for farmers production and the need for the farmers to use technology to achieve these goals. Broadband will be vital in making this happen.
3. Economic Development- I believe we all are aware that Broadband is essential for Business growth and prosperity in this day and age. It is no longer a luxury but a necessity. To that end having Broadband in our most Rural areas will foster new businesses as well as support existing ones that struggle with connectivity now. It will also open up opportunities for people to telework which in the case of QAC with some of our well publicized traffic issues should allow a reduction in commuter traffic.
4. Telemedicine- As one of 2 Counties in the state without a hospital we have been told by our County Health Officer what a benefit it would be for increased connectivity to expand the use of Telemedicine and help to curb some of the pressure on our Emergency Services as well as

providing a recognized savings to Healthcare, not to mention the convenience provided by the service.

In closing I would just like to say that I believe Choptank provides an excellent opportunity for the Eastern shore to get a much needed utility just as the Coops did 80 years ago to deploy Electric to our Rural areas. Thank You For your time and I hope you support SB 540.