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Support w/Amendment – HB 43 – DOIT – Office of Broadband and Joint Committee on Broadband

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

Choptank Electric Cooperative is pleased to begin making broadband service connections this summer through our new broadband affiliate. Our 54,000 members urge you to protect the Office of Broadband and the cost-share funding mechanism for infrastructure.

As we begin the monumental task of connecting homes and businesses in the most rural areas on the Shore, we rely heavily on the advice, expertise and funding support provided by the Office of Rural Broadband, and its Director, Rick Gordon.

CEC supports the intent of HB 43 and applauds the sponsor, Del. Krimm, for her work over the years to make lack of broadband access in rural areas a priority. HB 43 recognizes the need to codify the Office of Broadband and solidify permanent funding for infrastructure development.

We support amendments to keep the Office at the Department of Housing and Community Development, where it is currently housed. This will allow continued use of the Local Government Investment Fund (LGIF), which allows federal and state funding to flow through to local governments and their internet service provider (ISP) partners. This is a process that has proven successful and allows local government to identify priority areas of need.

Choptank Electric Cooperative also supports the amendments that have been offered by the Rural Maryland Council to streamline the functions of the Office of Broadband and continue the successful work of infrastructure development.

Overall, we **support HB 43 with amendments** and urge the Committee to codify the important role of the Office of Broadband.

Sincerely,

VALERIE T. CONNELLY
Vice President of Government Affairs & PR
Choptank Electric Cooperative

