



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 31, 2026

To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of HB972 - Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund - Establishment (Charles J. Otto Agricultural Education Promise Act)**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in favor of HB972 Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund - Establishment (Charles J. Otto Agricultural Education Promise Act). This legislation as amended, would add a \$200k appropriation in the budget to support the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation and Maryland FFA.

Agricultural education plays a crucial role in shaping the next generation of leaders, farmers, and informed consumers. Programs such as 4-H, FFA, and agricultural education in schools provide hands-on learning experiences that connect students to the agricultural industry while also teaching them valuable life skills. Through participation in these programs, young people develop leadership abilities, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and strong work ethic—qualities that benefit them regardless of their career paths. Additionally, agricultural education fosters a deeper appreciation for the role of farming in our economy, food supply, and environmental sustainability, helping to build a well-informed citizenry that supports and understands agriculture's significance.

Ensuring the continued success of agricultural education programs is essential not only for the students who directly benefit but also for the broader agricultural industry and local economies. These programs contribute to workforce development, fostering a pipeline of skilled individuals who will drive innovation and sustainability in agriculture. Without adequate funding, access to agricultural education and hands-on learning experiences will decline, potentially leading to long-term consequences for industry and rural communities. To maintain and expand these critical programs, alternative funding solutions must be explored, and policymakers must prioritize investment in agricultural education. Supporting these initiatives is not just about preserving tradition, it is about securing a strong future for Maryland's agricultural sector and ensuring that young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed in an ever-changing world.

For these reasons, Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully asks for a favorable report on HB972.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough", is positioned below a horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions