

Dear Delegates,

My name is Barry Burch. I am a retired Frederick County Public Schools Agricultural Educator, FFA Advisor, and the current Maryland Envirothon Chairperson. I am contacting you to request your support of "House Bill - HB972." This House Bill 972 targets funding for Agricultural Education which we hopefully will include the Maryland Envirothon Program.

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts sponsor the Maryland Envirothon. The Envirothon is a hands-on, natural resources education competition for high school students. The Envirothon is a program that has county, state, and international (NCF-Envirothon) competition levels. Our Maryland Envirothon students are becoming informed citizens by learning authentic assessment, critical thinking skills, and team-building skills in an outdoor educational setting. These students work in teams of 5 learning about Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, Wildlife, and a Current Environmental Issue that changes from year to year.

The Maryland Envirothon does not have a dedicated funding source, and we rely solely on fundraising and participation dues each year to operate the program. The program is set up so that any high school student in public or private schools, as well as homeschool groups, may participate without any cost.

The 2026 anticipated budget for this year's Maryland Envirothon program is \$65,000.00. The Maryland Envirothon program costs include awards, food, lodging, t-shirts, resource materials, and transportation to the international NCF-Envirothon event. By having a source of dedicated funds each year for the Maryland Envirothon, this would greatly benefit the students and enhance Maryland Envirothon program.

In my 28 years of teaching and working with the Envirothon, I have had the honor to mentor FFA and Envirothon students as they find their path moving forward in life. Some of those students are now a MDA Soil Conservation Planner, a MD DNR Supervisor, a University of Kentucky Plant and Soil Science professor, and an Urban Forester with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The point is: Maryland Agriculture Education and the Maryland Envirothon programs, go hand in hand, creating a monumental, positive impact on a high school student's potential, and their future career aspirations.

Thank you for your support!

Have A Good Day,
Barry Burch
Maryland Envirothon Chair
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