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Kentucky Hemp Association Urges Congress to Support American Hemp Farmers

The Kentucky Hemp Association (KYHA) is the statewide voice for the hemp industry in Kentucky. We focus on empowering our farmers and small businesses to meet growing consumer demand for hemp and hemp products, whether it be for grain, fiber, or cannabinoids. Our members spent the last eleven years investing their time and treasure into rebuilding a domestic supply chain of hemp and hemp products under the authorities of the 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills.

We write to express our strong opposition to Rep. Andy Harris's hemp language included in the Fiscal Year 2026 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. This language will have a devastating impact on our farmers and small businesses by destroying genetics developed to conform to the definition under the 2018 Farm Bill and recriminalizing hemp products with detectable amounts of THC.

Jonathan Shell, the Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture, understands the importance of providing certainty for hemp farmers in Kentucky. "Kentucky's farmers deserve stability and support as they work to grow and diversify their operations. We've seen strong progress in hemp production, including significantly increased acreage from last year—an encouraging sign of the industry's resilience and potential. To give Kentucky hemp growers every chance at success, I support the Kentucky Hemp Association's efforts to remove the over-broad proposed language in the FY2026 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill that would criminalize non-intoxicating CBD products in our hemp program."

The strong demand for hemp products in Kentucky is driven by adults seeking functional relief from chronic mental and physical pain not addressed by traditional options. The proposed language not only eliminates the most profitable end market for our farmers but turns Kentuckians into criminals.

Senator Rand Paul, a longtime champion of hemp farmers, appreciates how American farmers can strengthen our economy, "For years, Kentucky hemp farmers made investments based upon Congress' legalization of hemp, one of the Commonwealth's historically vital crops. Rather than put those investments and livelihoods at risk by unnecessarily recriminalizing hemp, Congress should pass my HEMP Act. The HEMP Act would help the industry reach its full economic potential by raising the currently arbitrary THC restriction that forces farmers to destroy a significant portion of their crop."

Kentucky has emerged as a national leader in hemp production and innovation, thanks to the dedication of KYHA members and the support of state-led regulatory frameworks. Now is not the time for the federal government to impose arbitrary changes that disrupt this progress. The hemp industry has consistently called for thoughtful regulation that protect consumers while preserving economic opportunities for farmers. Unfortunately, language recently introduced by Rep. Andy Harris would go too far. It would effectively dismantle Kentucky's age-restricted and tightly regulated hemp marketplace. Rather than rolling back years of responsible development, federal policy should reinforce this thriving sector—not seek to recriminalize it.