



February 19, 2026

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator McConnell,

As the current and former Commissioner of Agriculture for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, we write together to express our strong support for Kentucky's hemp farmers and businesses and to respectfully urge you to support a federal two-year extension of the new hemp definition included in the November CR.

Kentucky has long been a national leader in hemp research, production, and innovation—leadership made possible in large part by your historic efforts to legalize industrial hemp at the federal level. Because of that leadership, Kentucky farmers invested responsibly in this emerging crop, built infrastructure, created jobs, and contributed to rural economic development across the Commonwealth.

The provision included in the November CR has introduced significant uncertainty into the marketplace at a critical moment. Hemp is an annual crop, and farmers are making decisions now about seed, worker contracts, financing, and acreage for the upcoming growing season. Without additional time and clarity, many Kentucky producers face the risk of planting decisions that could jeopardize the long-term viability of their farms.

A two-year federal extension, as proscribed by H.R. 7024, sponsored by Jim Baird (R-IN) with 24 bipartisan co-sponsors, would not resolve the broader policy questions surrounding hemp, but it would provide farmers, processors, and regulators with the certainty needed to plan responsibly while Congress considers a durable, well-informed path forward. This additional time is essential to avoid unintended consequences for family farms and rural communities that have acted in good faith under existing federal and state law.

We respectfully ask that you allow space for this extension to move forward and help ensure that Kentucky's farmers are not placed at a disadvantage through abrupt policy changes. Doing so would reaffirm Kentucky's leadership in agriculture and honor the commitment made to producers who answered the call to grow this crop.

Thank you for your continued service to the Commonwealth and for your long-standing support of Kentucky agriculture. We stand ready to work with you and your





staff on solutions that protect farmers, strengthen rural economies, and provide a clear and workable future for the hemp industry.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Shell  
Commissioner of Agriculture, Commonwealth of Kentucky

James Comer  
Member of Congress, 1st District of Kentucky  
Former Commissioner of Agriculture, Commonwealth of Kentucky

