

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We are writing today for clarification regarding industrial hemp regulation and cultivation as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) begins implementing the Agriculture Improvements Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). While we are looking forward to expansive industrial hemp cultivation opportunities for Connecticut farmers after the regulatory process is complete, we request guidance to better understand what pathways to cultivation remain available in the interim.

During your testimony before the House Agriculture Committee last week, you stated that the regulatory process tied to industrial hemp cultivation in the 2018 Farm Bill will not be completed until 2020. While we share your commitment to crafting a strong regulatory framework, we share the concern of our stakeholders that finalizing regulations for industrial hemp until after the 2019 growing season will unintentionally curtail state buy-in and financial support in Connecticut.

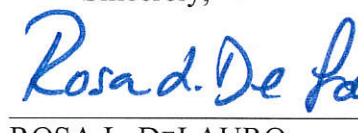
Like many states, Connecticut's General Assembly enacted legislation in 2015 (HB 5780) that defined industrial hemp as a distinct crop to take advantage of the industrial hemp research and pilot program established under the Agriculture Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill). To date, however, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture has yet to adopt pilot program regulations. However, since the inauguration last month of Governor Ned Lamont, the state has expressed a renewed interest in industrial hemp cultivation—including line item funding for an industrial hemp program in the recently-released budget proposal.

Accordingly, we are seeking guidance as to whether there remains a pathway to cultivation of industrial hemp in Connecticut for the 2019 growing season. Specifically, I request clarification on the viability of state or Tribal governments to submit new plans before the 2018 Farm Bill regulations are implemented, under the 2014 Farm Bill regulations.

We appreciate your continued commitment to expanding industrial hemp production and thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working with you on this issue in the future.

Sincerely,


JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress


ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress


JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress