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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

July 24, 2017

George Ervin "Sonny" Perdue III
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

There are now more than thirty states with laws authorizing industrial hemp pilot research or production programs as permitted under Section of 7606 of the Agricultural Act of 2014. States have been compelled to permit the exploration of industrial hemp production because of the growing market for hemp products and the opportunity industrial hemp may afford many farmers to add a crop to their rotation that can both improve soil health and provide additional revenue. I therefor request that you direct the Administrator of the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to begin consideration of how the U.S. Department of Agriculture can provide appropriate crop insurance options for industrial hemp producers and how industrial hemp may be incorporated into the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection Program.

On November 20, 2015, I joined with forty-seven of my Congressional colleagues to write a bipartisan, bicameral letter to the Secretary of Agriculture requesting clarification regarding whether institutions and producers authorized by the States to participate in industrial hemp pilot programs were eligible for federal research grant programs. The Statement of Principles on Industrial Hemp (81 FR 53395) issued jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Food and Drug Administration on August 12, 2016, affirmed that institutions of higher education and other participants authorized to grow industrial hemp would be eligible for such grant programs.

Institutions of higher education and other participants authorized to carry out agricultural pilot programs under section 7606 may be able to participate in USDA research or other programs to the extent otherwise eligible for participation in those programs

On August 23, 2016, USDA issued an Instruction for the Organic Certification of Industrial Hemp Production (NOP 2040) which informed NOP-accredited certifying agents that industrial hemp grown under State pilot programs may be certified as organic if produced in accordance with USDA organic regulations.

For hemp produced in the United States, only industrial hemp, produced in accordance with the 2014 Farm Bill, as articulated in the Statement of Principles on Industrial Hemp issued on August 12, 2016 by USDA, may be certified as organic, if produced in accordance with USDA organic regulations.

From these actions, it is clear that USDA supports industrial hemp research efforts undertaken in many states. To further support the production of industrial hemp, I ask that you take all necessary actions to provide sound risk management tools for hemp producers and so lay the foundation for reemergence of this important crop. I appreciate the work done by the USDA to improve the variety and availability of crop insurance programs for all U.S. farmers and look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

United States Senator