

## **AARON & BRENDA CROMER FARMS, LLC**

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February 13, 2017

Re: Kansas Agricultural Industry Growth Act

The House, Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee:

Dear Committee Members and Interested Parties:

My name is Aaron Cromer. I am an agricultural producer in Kansas and in Oklahoma. I have been active in agriculture production in those states since I was a child. In 2005, I began building my own farm and continue in that capacity today. I farm approximately 3,500 acres, the majority of which is located in the two southwest Kansas counties of Morton and Stevens. Additionally, I serve as controlling operator of approximately 2,200 acres of CRP.

I believe Kansans deserve the opportunity to bring hemp into our agricultural market for many and varied reasons. I have included some major points below.

The economic impact of both growing as well as refining industrial hemp would provide a huge financial opportunity for individual producers as well as for the economically struggling rural communities throughout our state. This production and refinement translates into a bottom line of tax revenue for these communities as well as for the state. The revenue derived from this emerging industry represents a new source to contribute financially to our state's economic stability. It would open the door to a new financial contributor to our "big picture", as well as giving our great state a leadership role in propelling this industry forward. After all, we make up a significant portion of the agricultural backbone of our nation and this type of leadership is expected of us. It is expected of us because it is "what we do".

The health and renewability for livestock and human consumption is an important aspect of hemp production. The benefits of hemp feed supplements to livestock rations for dairy and feeder cattle have great positive impact for the animals as well as for the associated industries. For human consumption, hemp produces a nutritious, high-protein oil that is easier and less expensive to refine than that from soybeans. Other aspects of human consumption include hemp inclusions into healthy foods, cosmetics and body care products, composite plastics (that are bio-degradable), clothing, paper products, construction materials and auto parts, just to name a very few uses of this renewable resource.

A long-standing source of major concern in our state is the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer. With the introduction of industrial hemp as a rotational crop and implemented on Kansas farms, the water requirements for irrigation practices state wide would diminish significantly. I can go on to say that under the acres dedicated to industrial hemp production, no herbicides and very

little pesticides would be required. The decreased use of these chemicals contributes to an ecologically smaller footprint of chemical runoff and possible chemical contamination of active waterways and groundwater in our state. These two factors would create significant savings for the producer in the categories of labor, fuel consumption and additional wear and tear to equipment used for these operations. If each producer in our state were to realize these types of expense savings on an individual basis, that number over all would be quite significant. There would also be less consumption of non-renewable natural gas, which is the primary fuel source of irrigation in my area.

Kansas is in a position to be a national leader in this rapidly emerging industry as a producer, processor and manufacturer. I feel that it is imperative to the survival of our rural communities to implement a means of growth and development that is attainable and sustainable. Farmers by nature are an independent, hard working sector of the Kansas, as well as National labor force. Historically, this nation's farmers have overcome many adversities through hard work, determination, education and a vision for the future. In the current economic plight faced by all Kansans, I am confident that with the support of our state government, Kansas farmers will rise to the challenge and succeed at this new and exciting industry.

During the last three years, I have dedicated considerable time, effort and research to educating myself regarding the growth and refinement of industrial hemp. I am very passionate as to this cause and am willing to share what I have learned. I am also prepared to demonstrate my commitment by offering to produce 360+ acres of industrial hemp for research and development in Kansas.

Sincerely,

Aaron K. Cromer