

## Growing Opportunities Act Passes Senate Agriculture Committee Unanimously

*Bi-partisan Bill Earns 9-0 Vote*

**Madison, WI** – Hemp, Wisconsin’s comeback crop, took another step forward today as members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue, and Financial Institutions voted unanimously for both the Growing Opportunities Act and its amendment, which were authored by Senators Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) and Representatives Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) and Dave Considine (D-Baraboo).

The legislation transitions Wisconsin’s hemp pilot program into a permanent program overseen by the state’s Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Inaction following the passage of the 2018 federal farm bill would have meant the program would eventually fall under the direction of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington D.C. Additionally, the amendment makes some changes to the original bill’s OWI provisions, causing law enforcement organizations to move from opposing the bill to a neutral stance.

“As we move forward, it’s important that Wisconsin manage its own program,” said Sen. Testin. “Wisconsin is poised to be a national leader in hemp production, and we want to do all we can to encourage that. I’ve enjoyed working with stakeholders from across the state, including law enforcement, to craft a bill that works for everyone.”

Rep. Kurtz, who grows organic hemp on his Juneau County farm, agreed.

“I’m very encouraged by the unanimous, bi-partisan support for this bill in the Senate’s agriculture committee, and I’m grateful to Senator Marklein, the chairman of that committee, for holding the hearing and the vote,” said Rep. Kurtz. “I’m confident that this bill will continue to move forward.”

Wisconsin is the home to both indoor and outdoor cultivation of hemp, which Senator Taylor pointed out creates opportunities throughout the state.

“Technology has enabled hemp cultivation, production, and product development to occur in rural and urban areas,” said Taylor. “Urban communities can be drivers for this industry, and Milwaukee has a definite role to play. This vote is a step in the right direction.”

Rep. Considine is already seeing significant development in his area.

“Sauk County is home to hemp farmers, processors, retailers, and consumers,” said Rep. Considine. “This bill aims to build confidence at every step of the way. This hemp bill will help everyone from farmers and processors who value a consistent regulatory framework to consumers who want to buy a safe and legal product.”

The bill is now available to be scheduled for a vote of the full Senate.

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