O'Mara welcomes Industrial Hemp Forum at Cornell on Wednesday: O'Mara has helped spearhead laws to spark growth of new industry regionally and statewide (UPDATED)

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Albany, N.Y., February 26—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), a leading legislative proponent over the past several years for the growth and manufacturing of industrial hemp

in New York, welcomed today's announcement that Cornell University will host the state's first Industrial Hemp Research Forum on Wednesday, February 28.

The **announcement was made earlier today in Albany**. Wednesday's forum will bring together researchers, academic leaders, businesses, and processors to discuss strategies aimed at advancing industrial hemp research in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide.

"I have valued the opportunity to work in partnership with Governor Cuomo, Assemblywoman Lupardo, and many legislative colleagues over the past few years to begin moving New York State to the forefront of a new industry with the potential to diversify our agricultural economy, generate revenue, and create jobs. We're moving forward to ensure that the development and growth of the industrial hemp industry will provide valuable new economic opportunities and a competitive edge for Southern Tier and Finger Lakes farmers and agribusinesses, together with the state's agricultural industry overall. We look forward to this important research forum at Cornell University," said O'Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

[UPDATE: At the February 27 legislative hearing on Governor Cuomo's 2018-19 proposed state budget, Senator O'Mara received updates from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard Ball on numerous topics critical to the future of agriculture and farming, including state efforts to develop an Industrial Hemp industry in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide. Watch **HERE** (the Industrial Hemp segment of the questioning begins at 2:38 of the video).]

Since 2014, O'Mara and Southern Tier Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (D-Endwell) have worked with the Cuomo administration to enact new laws that have jump-started the industry's growth in New York State and are helping secure an economic foothold for state

farmers in the nation's burgeoning industrial hemp industry.

Two years ago, for example, Cuomo approved a new law (Chapter 256 of the Laws of 2016) O'Mara and Lupardo sponsored allowing the transportation, processing, sale, and distribution of hemp grown as part of the New York's research pilot program. It also authorized universities and partner farmers to study and establish business and economic opportunities that continues to lay the groundwork for a fully-fledged agricultural industry.

Cuomo said, "New York will continue to make strategic investments that support agricultural innovation, expand the state's farming and manufacturing sectors, and help meet the growing demand for local products. By positioning the Southern Tier at the forefront of industrial hemp research and production, our farmers will capitalize on the growth potential of this crop, create new jobs, and boost economies across the region and the state."

Lupardo said, "According to the 2017 US Hemp Crop Report, New York is one of the top five growers in the country and is the leader in the Northeast. The state's research program has yielded invaluable information that is supporting New York's leadership in hemp production. This forum will allow everyone from growers, to processors, to manufacturers to share information that will further build this industry. I appreciate the Governor's continued commitment to growing this important sector of our economy."

Kathryn J. Boor, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, said, "New York's industrial hemp program has come a long way in a short period of time, and is poised for tremendous success. This forum will set help the agenda for the next phase of innovation for Cornell researchers, growers, state officials and other university partners in this important initiative. As New York's land-grant university, one of our roles is to help the state's agriculture industry open and capitalize on new markets. Based on what we've

learned so far, and will continue learn, industrial hemp is well positioned to achieve its promise."

According to today's announcement, the February 28 forum at Cornell will focus on improving and expanding New York's Industrial Hemp Agricultural Research Pilot Program, which will boost the agricultural sector and ensure the Empire State remains at the forefront of the emerging industry. Growing industrial hemp has the potential to diversify New York's farms, connect growers to new markets and provide them with new sources of income. Industrial hemp also offers opportunities to support economic growth across the state, including advanced manufacturing of composites, fibers, nutritional supplements and other products.

Cornell University has identified industrial hemp as a valuable commodity crop. Clothing, consumer products like soap, insulation, and more can be made from the plant's stalks and seeds. Hemp stalk and seed is also used to produce a variety of other goods including textiles, building materials, paper, food and environmental products such as biofuels, as well as being utilized for fiber, hempseed oil, and seed production. It is also a source of cannabidiol, a chemical compound used in medical marijuana applications, and is rich in Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids, which gives it numerous health benefits to both humans and animals. Hemp products generated nearly $600 million in U.S. sales in 2015.