

Representative Jim Baird, IN-04

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for hosting this Member hearing and for the opportunity to outline my priorities related to strengthening the budget process.

I want to highlight a recent example of where our budget process fell short—Section 781 of the recent Continuing Resolution and Appropriations bills, specifically the provision redefining hemp. Regardless of how any Member feels about the underlying policy, the process by which this provision became part of a must-pass appropriations bill reveals several weaknesses that this Committee is uniquely positioned to address.

Since the 2018 Farm Bill, American farmers have invested significant resources to rebuild a domestic supply chain of hemp. Many use hemp as a rotational crop to diversify income at a time when family farms urgently need stability. Yet Section 781 was added without regular order, without hearings, and without allowing the committees of jurisdiction to evaluate scientific, economic, and regulatory consequences. That is precisely the type of process failure that erodes confidence in our budgeting system.

The issue at hand is not whether consumer protections are needed. I firmly believe we should establish a clear regulatory framework that protects consumers from harm without undermining legitimate small businesses, penalizing farmers, or effectively outlawing an entire industry. States like Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia have already enacted responsible age restrictions, packaging standards, and testing requirements. Meanwhile, the House Energy & Commerce Committee and Senate HELP Committee have ongoing work examining safety concerns and FDA authority. That is where this debate belongs.

By inserting a sweeping policy change into an appropriations vehicle, we bypassed expert input, ignored alternative proposals, and denied farmers and stakeholders the opportunity to be heard. And by shutting down the responsible businesses that currently comply with state regulations we risk empowering the very bad actors who evade safety rules and target minors.

This committee has long warned about policy riders that circumvent both transparency and accountability. Section 781 provides a clear example of how significant, industry-wide policy decisions can be slipped into must-pass bills without scrutiny.

Going forward, I recommend that the Committee:

1. **Strengthen guardrails** preventing major statutory changes from being inserted into continuing resolutions or omnibus packages without hearings.
2. **Refine the budget calendar** to reduce the reliance on last-minute CRs that invite policy shortcuts.

3. **Establish enforcement mechanisms** ensuring committees of jurisdiction have adequate time and process to evaluate complex regulatory issues before they appear in spending bills.

American farmers, small businesses, and consumers deserve predictability—not surprises buried in appropriations text. A stronger budget process will help ensure that legitimate policy debates occur in the proper venue, with the transparency our constituents expect. In conclusion the 2018 Farm Bill definition for hemp is sufficient until we can have the opportunity to run this through regular order as suggested above.