**RESOLUTION # 4**

**ESTABLISHING A HEMP PRODUCTS INDUSTRY IN NEW JERSEY**

**WHEREAS**, hemp (*cannabis sativa*) was a major industrial crop grown in America since the Colonial period, and was used for textiles, paper and rope, and continues to this day to be used in fiberboard, construction materials, protein for both humans and livestock, lubricating oils and energy-producing biomass; and

**WHEREAS**, hemp-based plastics, which biodegrade at a much faster rate than petroleum-based plastics (which take hundreds to thousands of years to biodegrade in a landfill or in the oceans), can be substituted for more traditional plastics in many, although not all, uses for packaging, which would go far in reducing the amount of lesser-biodegradable plastics in landfills and waterways, creating a sizeable market for hemp grown in New Jersey; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to being able to be turned into bags and containers that could replace those made from traditional plastics, hemp-based polymers can be used to fashion durable building materials that can replace both plastic and wood materials in housing and other construction; and

**WHEREAS**, growing hemp for industrial uses, provided a processing sector is developed, would create something of a “closed-loop system” in which hemp grown for polymers and turned into packaging and building materials can be used on the farm where it was grown, as well as benefiting other farms in New Jersey, especially those with pick-your-own or on-farm marketing operations, which have been forced into having reuseable cloth bags replace plastic bags outlawed by the 2022 bill that was passed and signed into law prohibiting single-use plastic bags; and

**WHEREAS**, there continues to exist significant interest among New Jersey farmers in growing hemp as an alternative crop, as markets for products made from it continue to grow; and

**WHEREAS**, the varieties of hemp grown for these products to replace plastic are grown for their stalk strength, as opposed to those grown for their flowers to make CBD products, which are the kinds of hemp currently massed produced throughout the United States to the point where there is not enough demand for all that is grown; and

**WHEREAS**, as of the enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill on December 20, 2018, hemp and its products have been removed from the Schedule I list of the Controlled Substances Act and is no longer a controlled substance, although its closely related botanical “cousin,” marijuana remains on the Schedule 1 list; and

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Agriculture in 2019 submitted to the USDA its plan for a hemp program including testing for THC content, and the USDA approved that plan, setting the stage for the planting, cultivation and harvesting of hemp in New Jersey; and

**WHEREAS**, approaching the end of 2023, New Jersey had a total of 18 processors/handlers and 32 growers licensed, with 27 of those growers actively cultivating 71 hemp varieties on 17 outdoor acres and one indoor acre throughout the state; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor and Legislature included in the FY2023 State Budget $655,000 for the Department and its partners in higher education to pursue the necessary research and development to create a hemp industry in New Jersey geared toward creating an industrial hemp industry focusing on replacements for plastic bags and other packaging, as well as replacements for plastic and wood building materials.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8 , 2024, do hereby acknowledge the work of the Department to create the parameters of the state’s hemp program and secure USDA approval of that program, including testing of seeds and the inspections of growing facilities by the Department’s Division of Plant Industry, and further urge the Department and Division to work with farmers on planting the varieties of hemp most suited to be turned into polymers that can be used to create alternatives to plastic bags and containers, as well as building materials that can replace plastic and wood components.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we applaud the Legislature and Governor for the inclusion of funding in the FY2023 State Budget for beginning the work to establish this new industry and urge them to continue to include the necessary annual funding in the State budget to continue the testing, research, and promotional work of the Department and its partners in furthering the industrial hemp industry in New Jersey.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Legislature and Governor to insist that the Plastics Advisory Council, created within the Department of Environmental Protection to find replacements for the plastic bags outlawed by the 2022 law, immediately begin work, in collaboration with NJDA and its industrial-hemp partners, Rutgers and Stockton universities, on spurring hemp-based plastic bags as the primary replacement for the outlawed bags.