



February 25, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly

Re: Part K of S.9009/A.10009 (TED)

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

As President and CEO of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, representing 129,000 businesses across Manhattan, I write to respectfully urge you to reject Part K of S.9009/A.10009 (TED), which would impose a 75% tax on alternative nicotine products.

Every day, I hear from the small retailers who anchor Manhattan's commercial districts — bodegas, convenience stores, and neighborhood markets — about the challenges of operating with tight margins amid high rent, labor, and regulatory costs. These businesses provide daily necessities to residents, workers, and visitors, and they cannot absorb another blow.

While I strongly support the State's goal of reducing youth nicotine usage and improving public health, this proposal risks creating unintended economic and health consequences. Alternative nicotine products serve as lower-risk options for adult smokers attempting to transition away from combustible tobacco. A steep tax increase would significantly raise prices and remove the incentive to choose smoke-free alternatives. This policy may unintentionally encourage continued cigarette use, undermining harm-reduction efforts.

Furthermore, excessive taxation would likely expand illicit markets. Our member businesses already compete with unauthorized sellers of tobacco products. Increasing price disparities between legal and illegal markets will disadvantage compliant retailers and reduce tax revenue while weakening age-verification protections.

A more effective approach would focus on targeted enforcement against illegal sellers and education programs to prevent youth access. Responsible retailers should be treated as partners in public health policy rather than penalized by broad tax increases. At a time when small businesses face rising costs and economic uncertainty, this proposal would place additional strain on neighborhood commerce and working New Yorkers.

For these reasons, I respectfully request on behalf of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce that Part K of S.9009/A.10009 be removed from the final enacted budget.

I appreciate your consideration and stand ready to collaborate on balanced public health solutions that protect youth while sustaining local economies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Walker
President and CEO
Manhattan Chamber of Commerce