

Black Chamber of Commerce of NYC

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The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Majority Leader

The Honorable Carl Heastie, Speaker

February 25, 2026

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

On behalf of the **New York City Black Chamber of Commerce**, we express our **strong opposition** to **Part K of S.9009/A.10009 (TED)**. The proposed 75% tax on alternative nicotine products would disproportionately harm **Black and Brown communities**, deepen long-standing inequities, and place new financial burdens on New Yorkers already struggling to afford to live in this state.

New York has **1.5 million adult smokers**, with the highest smoking rates concentrated among lower-income residents—many of whom are from communities of color. Adults earning under \$20,000 a year are **2.8 times more likely to smoke**, and those with less than a high-school education are **4.9 times more likely to smoke** than more affluent or highly educated residents. This regressive tax would hit these communities hardest, making reduced-risk alternatives unaffordable and keeping many residents smoking combustible cigarettes.

Smoking already costs New York **\$12.1 billion in healthcare**, **\$7.12 billion in Medicaid spending**, and **\$18.2 billion in lost productivity** annually—burdens that fall disproportionately on Black and Brown neighborhoods. A policy that limits access to safer alternatives will only worsen these disparities.

Harms to Bodegas and Small Businesses

The proposal would also significantly **hurt bodegas and small businesses**, many of which are **Black-, Brown-, and immigrant-owned** and serve as economic anchors in their communities. Legal nicotine sales help sustain essential foot traffic for groceries and household goods. A 75% tax would sharply reduce legal sales, push more purchasing into the illicit market, and make it harder for these neighborhood businesses—already



operating on thin margins—to survive. This measure threatens not only individual store owners but also the economic health of entire communities.

Repeating Historical Harms

For decades, Black and Brown communities have borne the impacts of punitive tobacco policies, aggressive enforcement, and limited access to cessation tools. This proposal repeats those inequities: higher prices for safer alternatives, greater exposure to illicit markets, and disproportionate economic harm to the very neighborhoods the State has pledged to support.

For these reasons, we urge the removal of Part K of S.9009/A.10009 from the final budget. Effective youth prevention, harm reduction, and community health require **targeted enforcement and accessible alternatives**, not regressive taxes that deepen economic and health inequities.

Thank you for your attention and your commitment to equitable public-health and economic policy.

Respectfully,

New York City Black Chamber of Commerce

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