



**County
Health Officials
of New York**
Leading the way to healthier communities

SUPPORTS

A6956-A/S5433-A (Galef/Carlucci)

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to enacting the "tobacco-free pharmacies act"

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), strongly supports the above-referenced legislation which would prohibit tobacco sales by pharmacies.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States. Each year there are over 25,000 tobacco-related deaths in New York State. By necessity, the tobacco industry must recruit “replacement smokers”, primarily youth, to use these highly addictive products and replace those who quit or die. The 2012 Surgeon General’s Report indicates that tobacco marketing increases youth tobacco use.

While there are several important policy changes to be made in the area of retail sales of tobacco, perhaps the most critical is a prohibition on the sale of tobacco products by pharmacies. Tobacco sales in pharmacies raises ethical questions since tobacco is the only consumer product that, when used as intended, will kill at least one half of its long term users. Tobacco companies use health oriented stores such as pharmacies and drug stores to help legitimize their products and increase exposure to tobacco marketing and advertising.

Pharmacists are also the most accessible of all health care providers and increasingly represent “the face of neighborhood healthcare” in their communities. Given the ubiquity of local pharmacies and the important role they play as providers of health care, it can also be argued that it is an inherent conflict of interest for pharmacies to also profit from the sale of harmful products such as tobacco, known to cause cancer, heart and pulmonary diseases.

The majority of pharmacists are opposed to pharmacies selling tobacco. Many retail chain and independent pharmacies have already instituted voluntary bans, but 52% of all pharmacies in New York State still sell tobacco products.

In 2014, the Attorneys General of New York and of 27 other states and territories stated, “There is a contradiction in having these dangerous and devastating tobacco products on the shelves of a retail chain that services health care needs,” and that removing tobacco products from stores that contain a pharmacy would be a “step forward in keeping tobacco products away from youth.”

New York State has long been a national leader in reducing the use of, and exposure to, these deadly products. NYSACHO strongly supports a statewide ban on the sale of tobacco products in all pharmacies and stores that contain a pharmacy department. We urge the legislature to pass this legislation and continue to be a leader in reducing the human and economic toll caused by tobacco use.

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