



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Assemblymember Grace Lee, Senator Brian Kavanagh, Local Community Leaders Hold Press Conference Addressing Illegal Cannabis Stores in Lower Manhattan

BRIAN KAVANAGH October 19, 2023

| ISSUE: **CANNABIS LEGALIZATION**



Sen Kavanagh & Assemblymember Lee Seek to Close Illegal Cannabis Shops

Assemblymember Lee and Senator Kavanagh announced a new initiative to notify Lower Manhattan landlords of their legal and financial liability for leasing to stores illegally selling cannabis.

*New York, NY* – On Thursday, October 19, 2023, Assemblymember Grace Lee and Senator Brian Kavanagh held a press conference on Ludlow and Stanton Street to address the recent spread of illegal cannabis stores in Lower Manhattan. They announced their new initiative to notify all landlords suspected to be leasing to illegal cannabis vendors in the community of their potential legal and financial liability. New York State and City laws prohibit landlords from knowingly leasing to illegal smoke shops and subject them to various penalties, including increased fines through the cannabis policy reform legislation enacted through the state budget earlier this year. In the letters they sent to landlords, Assemblymember Lee and Senator Kavanagh affirmed their commitment to work with local law enforcement, including the Manhattan District Attorney’s office, to ensure these penalties are enforced.

This initiative comes in response to the huge increase in illegal cannabis stores in Lower Manhattan since New York legalized adult-use cannabis in 2021. These stores have raised frequent safety and quality-of-life concerns from local residents, and they undermine New York’s goal to make the commercialization of cannabis equitable by prioritizing communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition.

“When New York’s legislature set out to legalize cannabis, the goal was to create a safe, regulated industry that uplifts individuals who were disproportionately harmed by its criminalization”, **said Assemblymember Lee**. “The proliferation of illegal, unlicensed stores in our community has undermined this goal – it has crowded out legal applicants and brought dangerous products and activities to our neighborhoods. Landlords are legally responsible for preventing illegal conduct on their property, and I plan to work with Senator Kavanagh and local enforcement agencies to hold them accountable. We are working to eliminate illegal cannabis stores as part of our larger effort to keep Lower Manhattan safe.”

“The legalization of cannabis marked a monumental leap forward in our pursuit of equity and justice, however, it is imperative that we do not regress by allowing illegal smoke shops to dominate this emerging market”, **said Senator Kavanagh**. “These illicit establishments not only jeopardize public health and safety by offering untested and unregulated products, but they also deceive the public by presenting their businesses and products as licensed and authorized, when they are not. Consequently, the closure of these operations is not only necessary but also an essential step towards realizing the full potential of New York's legal cannabis market. I plan to work closely with Assemblymember Grace Lee, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, the New York City Police Department, the New York City Sheriff’s Office, and the New York State Office of Cannabis Management along with community leaders and residents to remove unlicensed cannabis/smoke shops from our district. We will not allow these shops to continue to threaten the public health and safety of this community.”

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