



Office of Cannabis Management

KATHY HOCHUL

Governor

TREMAINE WRIGHT

Cannabis Control Board Chair

JESSICA GARCIA

Board Member

REUBEN MCDANIEL, III

Board Member

JEN METZGER

Board Member

ADAM W. PERRY

Board Member

CHRIS ALEXANDER

Executive Director

May 23, 2022

Shouzi Chew

Chief Executive Officer

TikTok

South Tower, 8 Marina Boulevard, One Raffles Quay

Singapore 018981

Vanessa Pappas

Chief Operating Officer

TikTok

5800 Bristol Parkway

Los Angeles, CA 90034

Dear Mr. Chew & Ms. Pappas:

I write to urge TikTok to allow the use of the word “cannabis” in public education advertisements, where the ads are sponsored by a government entity and promoting public health and safety.

As you may have heard, in 2021, New York State enacted the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act¹, which legalized the adult-use of cannabis in the state. Part of that legislation created our agency, the Office of Cannabis Management. Another part of that legislation requires our agency to establish an “education campaign regarding the legalization of adult-use cannabis and the impact of cannabis use on public health and safety.”

To fulfill our legal obligation to establish education campaigns, our office has launched Cannabis Conversations² to educate New Yorkers on who can purchase cannabis, where can you legally use cannabis, and how one can safely use cannabis, including protecting youth. We are airing ads from this campaign on broadcast television, on billboards across New York, and on various social media platforms.

But when we tried advertising on TikTok, we were informed you do not take cannabis ads of any kind, including ones from government accounts promoting health and education. We presume this is tied to the section of your Industry Entry Advertising Policy³ restricting “depiction or featuring of drugs-related words, symbols or images.” But we know our colleagues at the New York State Department of Health have run paid advertisements on TikTok as part of their public health campaigns. We hope to be allowed to run similar public health campaigns on your platform.



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We ask you to please reconsider your current blanket ban on advertisements using the word “cannabis” on TikTok.

As you note on your own website encouraging organizations and brands to advertise on TikTok, “88%⁴ of TikTokers love discovering new content while using the app.” We couldn’t agree more, and we hope to help TikTokers in New York State discover and learn more about what cannabis legalization means for them and how to keep themselves, and their families, safe as adult-use cannabis sales begin in New York this year.

One report⁵ indicates 75% of TikTok users are between the ages of 18 and 34, a demographic we are attempting to target with our public education campaigns. This group includes a critical age range, of those over 18 but under 21, where brains are still growing and our messaging provides information on the risks they face at that young age if they use it. It also includes parents and other caregivers who deserve access to the tools we’re providing to help them discuss the risks of cannabis with the youth in their lives. Our public health education campaign also delivers the message that it’s both unsafe and illegal to drive while impaired by cannabis, another important message for this age group where decision-making often leans toward risk-taking.

We ask you to join us in the effort to make sure the end of cannabis prohibition in New York is safe for residents of all ages. Clear and truthful public health information is essential in our public information campaigns, and TikTok could be a valued partner in this fight for public safety. But that can only be the case if you allow us to run advertisements on your platform.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Chris Alexander

Executive Director, New York State Office of Cannabis Management