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# Office of Cannabis Management

## **ICYMI: NEW YORK AG SECURES \$6 MILLION JUDGMENT AGAINST UNLICENSED CANNABIS STORE**

*State Cracks Down on Illegal Cannabis Operators, Shutting Down Big Chief Smoke Shop*

*OCM and Attorney General's Office Take Strong Action to Protect New York's Legal Market*

**NEW YORK, NY** – In a decisive victory for New York's legal cannabis industry, Attorney General Letitia James secured a \$6 million judgment against Big Chief Smoke Shop, an unlicensed cannabis store in Brooklyn, following repeated violations of the state's Cannabis Law. This action, taken in partnership with the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) and the Department of Taxation and Finance (DTF), reinforces the state's commitment to holding illicit operators accountable and ensuring a fair, regulated market for licensed businesses. Big Chief's owner is now required to pay nearly \$5.9 million in penalties, alongside \$121,000 in disgorgement of illegal profits and \$44,000 in legal costs, after ignoring multiple cease-and-desist orders and continuing to sell cannabis illegally.

Big Chief Smoke Shop was found to be selling unlicensed cannabis as early as November 2022 and continued operations despite multiple enforcement actions. In August 2023, OCM and DTF investigators seized more than 400 pounds of illicit cannabis products, served a cease order, and publicly posted warnings on the storefront. However, Big Chief refused to comply, removing the violation notices and resuming illegal sales. A follow-up inspection in October 2023 resulted in the seizure of an additional 200 pounds of unlicensed cannabis, leading to a court-mandated closure of the store in December 2023.

“This \$6 million judgment is a major victory for New York’s regulated cannabis market. Illicit operators like Big Chief not only undermine the businesses that are following the law but also put consumers at risk by selling untested products,” said **Felicia A.B. Reid, Acting Executive Director of the New York State Office of Cannabis Management**. “At OCM, we will continue to take strong enforcement actions to protect public health, uphold the law, and create a fair and thriving marketplace for licensed operators.”

This case demonstrates the serious consequences of operating outside New York’s regulated cannabis market. Unlicensed cannabis products are untested, potentially unsafe for consumers, and evade state tax requirements, harming legal dispensaries that comply with mandatory regulations. OCM remains committed to partnering with law enforcement agencies to shut down bad actors and protect consumers. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG), authorized to take legal action at OCM’s request, will continue its aggressive enforcement efforts to maintain the integrity of New York’s cannabis industry. We also thank the Department of Taxation and Finance (DTF) for their continued collaboration in these efforts, ensuring compliance and holding illicit operators accountable.

“Illegal dispensaries have no place in New York’s cannabis market. This judgment reinforces that operating without a license comes with serious consequences,” said **Daniel Haughney, Director of Enforcement and Investigations at the New York State Office of Cannabis Management**. “Through our partnership with the Attorney General’s Office and the Department of Taxation and Finance, we are making it clear that those who ignore the law and continue to sell illicit cannabis will be held accountable.”

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