Dear NYS Elected Official,

I oppose Governor Cuomo’s 75% tax increase on tobacco in the current budget proposal for this coming year effective September 1, 2018. This increase if passed, will have a significant negative impact on small business people who own cigar and pipe shops. The last 75% increase forced a high percentage of small cigar and pipe business owners to close their doors, and the State had to spend tax payer funds fighting a law suit from Davidoff Tobacco Company along with a subsequent tax roll back.

Tobacco has become the most frequent target of tax increases, for supposed public health and financial grounds.  State legislatures have all jumped onto the anti-tobacco bandwagon with advertisements and tax disincentives, to discourage the use of tobacco products.

The Food and Drug Administration, which now regulates cigars, published an FDA staff report showing that smoking up to two cigars a day has minimal significant health risks.

It’s time to carve out Cigar and Pipe Tobacco from the Cigarette, Hookas, and E-cigarette families that add paper and chemicals to their products. 90% of Cigar and Pipe tobaccos are chemical free. Most cigar and Pipe tobacco consumers oppose the additives put into cigarettes, E-cigarettes and Hookas, and recognize the health concerns associated with them.

A 75% tobacco tax on cigars and pipe tobacco would significantly increase on-line tobacco purchases, impose further restrictions on cigar and pipe consumers, force small business owners out of business, and encourage smuggling and tax purchase evasion.  Beyond a certain level, tax increases on cigar and pipe tobacco become counter-productive by both failing to raise more revenue and pushing smokers to purchase products on-line, Indian reservations and the black market.

I ask for your help in remove Cigars and Pipe Tobacco from any increase in tobacco taxes and also to help make a differentiation between Cigar and Pipe Tobacco, and Cigarette and Hooka tobacco and e- cigarette liquids and associated products.