

**INTRODUCTORY
NO.**

F.N. 2024-

BOARD OF COUNTY LEGISLATORS ONEIDA COUNTY

RESOLUTION NO.

INTRODUCED BY:

2ND BY:

LOCAL LAW INTRO. ____ OF 2024

LOCAL LAW NO. ____ OF 2024

A LOCAL LAW AUTHORIZING ONEIDA COUNTY TO CONDUCT REGULATORY INSPECTIONS AND TAKE ACTIONS TO ENFORCE NEW YORK STATE CANNABIS LAW PURSUANT TO NEW YORK STATE CANNABIS LAW SECTION 131.

BE IT ENACTED, by the Board of County Legislators of the County of Oneida, State of New York, as follows:

Section 1. Authorization, Title and Purpose.

This Local Law is hereby enacted pursuant to New York Cannabis Law Section 131 as provided herein.

Section 2. Legislative Finding.

The State of New York, through amendments to the New York Cannabis Law, has granted local governments increased powers to inspect properties and to regulate and pursue enforcement remedies against unlicensed cannabis activity. The Board of County Legislators of the County of Oneida finds that the County of Oneida has experienced unlicensed cannabis activity that is difficult to police under existing regulations and finds that adopting this Local Law to empower Oneida County authorities to conduct regulatory inspections of properties suspected of unlicensed cannabis activities, and to pursue enforcement remedies against such activities is necessary to protect the public health, safety and welfare and to promote the public good.

Section 3. Legislative intent.

The purpose of this Local Law is to prohibit unlicensed cannabis activities, to adopt procedures for conducting regulatory inspections of premises suspected of such activities, and to authorize the commencement of enforcement mechanisms and to seek remedies to halt such activities in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare and to promote the public good.

Section 4. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Local Law, the definitions of "person," "unlicensed activity," "indirect retail sale," and "place of business" shall be as those terms are defined in the New York Cannabis Law § 131.

Section 5. Inspections Permitted.

- A. The Oneida County Public Health Department is hereby authorized to conduct regulatory inspections of any place of business located within the County of Oneida, including a vehicle used for such business, that is suspected of engaging in unlicensed activity or otherwise not being licensed or registered with the New York State Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) to engage in retail sales of cannabis.
- B. Scope of inspections. Regulatory inspections shall be limited to determining whether the premises is conducting activity for which a license from OCM is required. Any such regulatory inspection shall only occur during the operating hours of a place of business, with or without notice, and shall be conducted for the purpose of civil administrative enforcement with respect to whether the premises has a lawful OCM license. Nothing herein shall limit any enforcement action under law when illegal activity is observed or occurs during such inspection.
- C. The Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, is designated as Oneida County's liaison to OCM and shall:
 - i. ensure that updates to the OCM directory of licensees are immediately incorporated into the local inspection process, coordinate with OCM on efforts to inspect unlicensed businesses and related local enforcement efforts;
 - ii. send biweekly reports to OCM in a manner and format prescribed by it detailing recent enforcement efforts, including information regarding the number and location of inspections conducted, notices of violation issued, and orders to seal issued and executed, and the amount and nature of the cannabis, cannabis products, or products marketed as such seized; and
 - iii. serve as the primary contact for OCM in connection with its training program and the sharing of materials made available to counties and cities with regard to the inspection and enforcement of unlicensed cannabis businesses.

Section 6. Complaints.

The Oneida County Public Health Director, his/her designee, or any person, may file a written complaint with the Oneida County Public Health Department which alleges or asserts the existence of an unlicensed activity. The Oneida County Public Health Department shall review and investigate written complaints. The process for responding to a complaint shall include such of the following steps as the Oneida County Public Health Department may deem to be appropriate:

- A. conduct a regulatory inspection pursuant to § 5 herein and documenting the results of such inspection;
- B. issue a notice of violation and order to cease the unlicensed activity, setting forth the nature of the unlawful conduct along with any fines or penalties for such conduct in amounts not to exceed the fines set forth in § 15 herein, and order any person who is unlawfully selling cannabis, cannabis product, or any product marketed or labeled as such without obtaining the appropriate registration, license, or permit therefor, or engaging in indirect retail sale, to cease such prohibited conduct, provided that any such notice of violation and order to cease unlicensed activity may only be issued against the business that is conducting the unlicensed activity or an individual owner of the business. Any notice of violation and order to cease unlicensed activity shall be served by delivery of the order to the owner of the business or other person of suitable age or discretion in actual or apparent control of the premises at the time of the inspection and shall be posted at the building or premises that have been sealed, secured and closed. A copy of the order shall also be mailed to any address for the owner of the business at any address provided by the person to whom such order was delivered pursuant to this paragraph;
- C. seize any cannabis, cannabis product, or any product marketed or labeled as such, found in the possession of a person engaged in unlicensed activity and in their place of business, including a vehicle used for such business, maintain documentation of the chain of custody of such seized products, and ensure that such products are properly stored, catalogued, and safeguarded until such time as they may properly be destroyed by the County;
- D. issue an order to seal the building or premises of any business engaged in unlicensed activity, when such activity is conducted, maintained, or permitted in such building or premises, occupied as a place of business subject to the following procedures:
 - i. Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, may issue an order to seal with an immediate effective date if such order is based upon a finding by the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, of an imminent threat to the public health, safety, and welfare, as defined in § 7 herein.
 - ii. Any order to seal shall be served by delivery of the order to the owner of the business or other person of suitable age or discretion in actual or apparent control of the premises at the time of the inspection and shall be posted at the building or premises that have been sealed, secured and closed. A copy of the order shall also be mailed via first class mail to any address for the owner of the business provided by the person to whom such order was delivered pursuant to this paragraph. The order shall remain in effect pending a hearing and final determination of a court, or until such order is vacated by the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee. An order to seal shall explicitly state that a request for a hearing may be submitted in writing to Oneida County Attorney within seven (7) days. Upon

receiving such a request for a hearing, the Oneida County Attorney shall file a copy of the request with the County Court Clerk in Oneida County.

- iii. The County Court shall then fix the date of such hearing no later than three (3) business days from the date such notice is received by the Court and provide notice to the parties of the date, time, and location of the hearing. Upon such date, the Court shall hear testimony and receive evidence presented by the parties. Within four (4) business days of the conclusion of the hearing, the Court shall make a determination as to: (i) whether the person upon which the order to seal was issued was engaged in unlicensed activity, (ii) if the person is found to have engaged in unlicensed activity, then whether such unlicensed activity presents an imminent threat to public health, safety and welfare as provided herein, and (iii) whether the unlicensed activity as described in this section is more than a de minimis part of the business activity on the premises or in the building to be sealed pursuant to the order. However, when an order to seal has been issued upon a second or subsequent inspection in which unlicensed activity is confirmed to be continuing more than ten (10) calendar days after a notice of violation and order to cease unlicensed activity was previously issued, the Court need only determine: (i) whether the person upon which the order to seal was issued was engaged in unlicensed activity; (ii) whether a notice of violation and order to cease unlicensed activity had been issued eleven (11) or more days prior to the issuance of the order to seal; and (iii) whether the order to seal was issued in compliance with § 6(D) herein. If the Court determines that an order to seal was not properly issued, the Court shall vacate such order. If the Court is satisfied that an order to seal was properly issued, the Court may render a judgment affirming the issuance of an order to seal, and direct the closing of the building or premises by any police officer or peace officer as defined in New York State Criminal Procedure Law to abate the unlicensed activity and shall direct any police officer or peace officer as defined in New York State Criminal Procedure Law to post a copy of the judgment and a printed notice of such closing conforming to the requirements of this Local Law. The closing directed by the judgment shall be for such period as the Court may direct but in no event shall the closing be for a period of more than one (1) year from the posting of the judgment provided for in this section. Failure of a party that requested a hearing to appear at the hearing will result in a default and order of sealing to remain in effect for such period as the Court may direct but in no event shall the order be in effect for a period of more than one (1) year from the posting of the judgment unless otherwise vacated as provided for herein.
- iv. Upon a determination by the County Court that a person or place of business has engaged in unlicensed activity, the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, pursuant to New York Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law § 715-a, personally serve upon the owner or landlord of the premises, or upon their agent, a written notice requiring the owner or landlord to make an application for the removal of a commercial tenant so using or occupying the same for a violation of Article 6 of the New York State Cannabis Law involving the unlicensed sale of cannabis or products marketed or labeled as such. The County of Oneida

may thereafter authorize the commencement of further legal proceedings pursuant to New York Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law § 715-a and seek an award of remedies provided thereunder.

Section 7. Imminent Threat to Public Health, Safety, and Welfare.

Factors that determine an imminent threat to public health, safety, and welfare shall be limited to:

- A. documented sales to minors;
- B. unlicensed processing of cannabis products at the building or premises;
- C. orders issued following an inspection wherein the person engaged in the unlicensed activity engaged in violent, tumultuous, or other behaviors indicating expressed intent to not comply with the office's order to cease the unlicensed activity;
- D. documented presence of unlawful firearms at the building or premises;
- E. proximity of the building or premises to schools, houses of worship, or public youth facilities;
- F. presence of products deemed unsafe based on reports of illness or hospitalization; or
- G. sales of, or offers to sell, cannabis products not tested or labeled lawfully in accordance with this New York State Cannabis Law.

Section 8.

Notwithstanding the factors listed in § 7 herein and the restrictions set forth in § 9(B) herein, the County of Oneida may issue an order to seal with an immediate effective date upon a second or subsequent inspection in which unlicensed activity is confirmed to be continuing more than ten (10) calendar days after a notice of violation and order to cease unlicensed activity was previously issued by the County of Oneida, provided that the County of Oneida has also provided notice that the premises may be subject to an order to seal if upon a subsequent inspection the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, finds that the violation has not be abated.

Section 9.

An order to seal may be issued by the County of Oneida only if:

- A. no part of the premises to be sealed is used in part as a residence and pursuant to local law or ordinance is zoned and lawfully occupied as a residence; and
- B. the unlicensed activity as described in this section is more than a de minimis part of the business activity on the premises or in the building to be sealed pursuant to the order. In the event that an order to seal may not be issued pursuant to this subdivision, the

Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, shall issue a notice of violation and order to cease the unlicensed conduct, which shall constitute notice that such unlicensed activity must cease immediately.

Section 10.

In assessing whether unlicensed activity within a building or premises is more than de minimis, the County of Oneida shall consider factors such as any one or more of the following:

- A. the presence of signs or symbols, indoors or out, advertising the sale of cannabis or otherwise indicating that cannabis is sold on the premises;
- B. information shared in any advertisements or other marketing content in connection with the unlicensed business activity and any direct or indirect sales of cannabis or other conduct in violation of this Local Law or New York State Cannabis Law;
- C. the volume of illicit cannabis products on site; and
- D. the variety of illicit cannabis products on site.

Section 11.

Any police officer or peace officer as defined in New York State Criminal Procedure Law with jurisdiction may assist in the enforcement of an order to seal issued by the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, in accordance with the following procedures:

- A. The officer serving and executing the order to seal shall forthwith make and return to the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, an inventory of personal property situated in and used in conducting, maintaining, or permitting the unlicensed activity within the scope of this Local Law and shall enter upon the building or premises for such purpose. Such inventory shall be taken in any manner which is deemed likely to evidence a true and accurate representation of the personal property subject to such inventory including, but not limited to photographing such personal property.
- B. The officer serving and executing the order to seal shall enter the building or premises and, upon service of the order, command all persons present in the building or premises to vacate the premises forthwith. Upon the building or premises being vacated, the premises shall be securely locked and all keys delivered to the officer serving the order who thereafter shall deliver the keys to the fee owner, lessor, or lessee of the building or premises involved. If the fee owner, lessor, or lessee is not at the building or premises when the order is being executed, the officer shall securely padlock the premises and retain the keys until the fee owner, lessor, or lessee of the building is ascertained, in which event, the officer shall deliver the keys to such fee owner, lessor, or lessee.

- C. Upon service and execution of the order to seal, the officer shall post a copy thereof in a conspicuous place or upon one or more of the principal doors at entrances of such premises where the unlicensed activity is being conducted, maintained, or permitted. In addition, the officer shall affix, in a conspicuous place or upon one or more of the principal doors at entrances of such premises, a printed notice that the premises have been closed by order of the County of Oneida, and the name of the officer posting the notice.
- D. Mutilation or removal of such a posted order or such a posted notice while it remains in force, in addition to any other punishment prescribed by law, shall be punishable, on conviction, by a fine of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) or by a class B misdemeanor, or both, provided such order or notice contains therein a notice of such penalty, and shall be referred to the district attorney for enforcement. The County of Oneida shall also adhere to the procedures in this subdivision when executing an order to seal issued in accordance with this section.

Section 12.

Any order to seal issued pursuant to this Local Law shall be effective for one (1) year from the later of the posting of the order or the date of the judgment provided for in this Local Law. An order to seal shall be vacated by the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, if the respondent submits sufficient evidence to the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, by an affidavit and such other proof as may be submitted by the respondent that the unlicensed activity has been abated. An order vacating an order to seal shall include a provision authorizing the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, or any officer assisted with the execution of the order to seal, to inspect the building or premises without notice for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the unlicensed activity has been abated. Any police officer or peace officer as defined in New York State Criminal Procedure Law with jurisdiction may, upon the request of the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, assist in the enforcement of an inspection provision of an order vacating an order to seal.

Section 13.

The Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, shall mail a copy, by certified mail, of any order to seal within five (5) days following issuance of such order to the person in whose name the real estate affected by the order is recorded in the office of the County Clerk, who shall be presumed to be the owner thereof. Such mailing shall constitute notice to the owner and shall be deemed to be complete upon such mailing by the office as provided above.

Section 14.

If at any time a respondent vacates the building or premises subject to an order to seal issued by the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, or if the building owner provides sufficient proof thereof, any action or proceeding filed in accordance with these procedures relating to such building or premises shall be withdrawn by the Oneida County Public Health Director, or his/her designee, and any order to seal shall be vacated.

Section 15. Penalties.

Any person who engages in the unlawful sale of cannabis, cannabis product, or any product marketed or labeled as such, or in indirect retail sales, shall be subject to a civil penalty of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) if it be a first unique instance of violation; five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) if it be a second unique instance of violation; and ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) if it be a third or subsequent unique instance of violation and each and every subsequent violation, for each day during which such violation continues, with a maximum penalty of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00) per each unique instance of violation. The penalty provided for herein may be recovered by an action or proceeding in a court of competent jurisdiction brought by the County of Oneida to enforce the notice of violation provided for herein.

Section 16. Other Civil Remedies.

In addition to, and not in limitation of any other remedies provided herein, the Board of County Legislators of Oneida County and/or the Oneida County Executive may direct the County Attorney to maintain an action or proceeding against any person in the name of the County of Oneida in a court of competent jurisdiction to compel compliance with, or to permanently or preliminarily restrain by injunction the violation of, this Local Law or any other law or ordinance authorizing the use of the procedures of this Local Law, or any rule or regulation adopted pursuant thereto, including but not limited to the relief provided in New York Cannabis Law §16-a and New York Real Property and Proceedings Law § 715-a.

Section 17. Validity and Severability.

Should any word, section, clause, paragraph, sentence, part or provision of this Local Law be declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such determination shall not affect the validity of any other part hereof.

Section 5. Effective Date.

This Local Law shall take effect the later of ten (10) days after its filing with the OCM, or upon its filing in the office of the Secretary of State.