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Dear Mr Kwok Wai Keung (Chairman)

**Bills Committee on Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019
Call to regulate alternative tobacco products rather than introducing a blanket ban**

We, Excel Media Group Limited, publish HR Magazine and organise regular HR and employee wellness Conferences across the Greater Bay Area and Greater China. I am writing on behalf the Group to urge the HKSAR Government to introduce proper regulation of alternative tobacco products rather than the proposed outright ban on IQOS and e-cigarettes.

Rationale

1. Many smokers have already switched from traditional cigarettes to IQOS (which through the 'heat not burn' principle have been demonstrated to release lower levels of toxic substances than traditional cigarettes (a claim endorsed by the FDA)¹.
2. The products can used to help people quit smoking altogether. Public Health England says there is a large amount of evidence that shows e-cigarettes are much less harmful than smoking - at least 95% and state, "We encourage smokers to try e-cigarettes as a way of stopping smoking. People who combine e-cigarettes with support from their local stop-smoking service have some of the highest quit success rates."²

¹ <https://www.livescience.com/61538-heat-not-burn-tobacco-iqos.html>

² Evidence review of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products 2018 A report commissioned by Public Health England
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684963/Evidence_review_of_e-cigarettes_and_heated_tobacco_products_2018.pdf and
<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-42328236>

3. In the free-market system of Hong Kong, the Government should help preserve the freedom of choice for the public in legal items that they wish to purchase. Being in the media, we regularly have to meet and greet clients and the tangible benefits of switching to IQOS are clear in terms of creating no ash, no smoke, less of the smell associated with traditional cigarettes—which all helps lessen the impact to others in the work environment.
4. The proposed blanked ban on such products will likely simply push their purchase via illegal trade sources. This would not only lose an important source of tax for the HKSAR Government, but would also make it impossible to control the quality of the illegally imported products.

Conclusion

The best solution to enhancing the health of Hong Kong citizens is quitting smoking altogether, but this has to be a personal choice, and not a government mandated one. For those who do not wish to or cannot currently quit smoking, IQOS and e-cigarettes provide a much less harmful alternative, and one which has been endorsed by Public Health England as being a viable means of helping smokers to quit.

Recommendation

Therefore, we urge the HKSAR Government to regulate these products and make them legally accessible throughout Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely



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Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

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