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US High Schooler Cigarette Use is at Historic Low While Nearly a Quarter Reported Using E-Cigarettes
STATEMENT OF ROBIN KOVAL, CEO AND PRESIDENT OF TRUTH INITIATIVE
ON NATIONAL YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY 2015 RESULTS

It is terrific news that the results of the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), released today by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show that U.S. high school students are smoking fewer cigarettes than ever in the survey's history — a 30 percent decline since 2013. Use of other combustible products, such as cigars, is also headed down. However, the data also show that overall use of tobacco and nicotine products among youth was up, due primarily to past thirty-day use of electronic vapor products, such as e-cigarettes. With nearly one in four youth experimenting with vaping, these data provide further support for the need to regulate these products. High school students are widely experimenting with e-cigarettes, which are not yet regulated for their contents or quality and are sold in candy, fruit and alcohol flavors proven to appeal to young people. Further steps should also be taken to end the marketing of flavored tobacco and nicotine products, including menthol cigarettes, which are the dominant starter products for youth smoking.

The key takeaway from the continued and dramatic decline in cigarette use in the face of a rising total for all tobacco and nicotine products should be that robust public education programs and laws that limit youth access, with minimum package size requirements, fees and taxes, and enforced minimum age requirements for sale, are effective at changing teen behavior. They've helped bring cigarette use down again in 2015, and policymakers and advocates for youth need to prioritize bringing those effective solutions to the full array of tobacco and nicotine products.

This is the first time the YRBS included e-cigarettes so there is no way to assess trends. While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently asserted its authority over e-cigarettes, full regulation will take a minimum of two to three years. That is a long time to wait and more robust restrictions on flavored products and marketing that protect youth, may take even longer. It isn't surprising that these unregulated products would be the ones that end up being used by youth, given they're easier to obtain and their access is largely unrestricted.

The new data are coming out just as lawsuits and other misguided efforts are unfolding in an attempt to prevent the FDA from moving ahead with their new limits on e-cigarettes. The numbers, however, make very clear why the FDA must be able to limit the marketing and appeal of these products to young people and review new products for their potential impact on public health without delay.

About Truth Initiative

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization that is inspiring tobacco-free lives and building a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**[®] public education campaign, our rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and our innovative community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco. The Washington, D.C.-based organization, formerly known as Legacy, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more about our work speaking, seeking and spreading the truth about tobacco, visit truthinitiative.org.