

Truth Initiative and CVS Health Foundation Launch Program to Make Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Community Colleges Tobacco-Free

Effort aims to help communities profiled by the tobacco industry

Washington, D.C. April 13, 2017 – [Truth Initiative® and the CVS Health Foundation are joining together to work with students and administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities \(HBCUs\) and community colleges across the country to advocate for, adopt and implement 100 percent smoke- and tobacco-free campus policies.](#)

Where you live, who you love, your race, your mental health and financial status play an important role in how hard tobacco companies come after you. For decades, African Americans, low-income neighborhoods, LGBTQ communities and those with mental illness have been disproportionately targeted with advertising and promotional efforts. The “**truth** x CVS Health Foundation” tobacco-free campus initiative follows the launch of the latest campaign by **truth**®, #STOPPROFILING, that underscores the fact that tobacco use is more than a public health issue, it’s a social justice issue.

Despite lower youth and young adult smoking rates overall, smoking on college campuses remains a problem in the U.S. Of the 102 federally recognized HBCUs in the country, less than half have smoke-free and/or tobacco-free campus policies. Of the 1,108 community colleges in the U.S., only 360 have 100 percent smoke-free policies in place.

“With 99 percent of smokers starting before age 27, college campuses are critical to preventing young adults from starting tobacco use, aiding current smokers in quitting and reducing exposure to secondhand smoke for all,” said Robin Koval, CEO and President of Truth Initiative, the national public health organization that directs and funds the **truth** campaign. “Our partnership aims to counteract the decades of profiling of African Americans and low income communities by Big Tobacco. We are thrilled to be working with the CVS Health Foundation to make smoking and tobacco use a thing of the past on HBCU and community college campuses.”

Since the launch of their tobacco-free college program in 2015, Truth Initiative has awarded funding to 135 colleges. To date, 50 colleges have gone smoke- or tobacco-free (40 community colleges and 10 HBCU’s).

The “**truth** x CVS Health Foundation” tobacco-free campus initiative is part of CVS Health’s *Be The First* campaign, the company’s five year, \$50 million commitment to helping deliver the nation’s first tobacco-free generation. CVS Health and the CVS Health Foundation have set actionable and measurable goals for *Be The First*, including a doubling of the number of tobacco-free educational institutions in the United States.

In addition to supporting Truth Initiative to expand technical assistance to support 42 HBCUs and 64 community colleges advance their campus policy effort, the CVS Health Foundation is also working with the American Cancer Society to help 125 colleges advocate for, adopt and implement 100 percent smoke- and tobacco-free campuses. Students, faculty and staff at the schools are charged with developing a campus task force, assessing tobacco use on their campus

and developing public-education campaigns to support comprehensive tobacco- and smoke-free policies on the campus.

“Today’s young people are a generation with an unyielding commitment to diversity, inclusivity and equality, and that includes making sure health benefits are equally distributed across ethnic and socioeconomic classes,” said David Casey, Chief Diversity Officer at CVS Health. “We’re proud that the CVS Health Foundation is working with Truth Initiative to help HBCUs and community colleges adopt tobacco-free campus policies. Helping more colleges and universities go tobacco-free is an important step in achieving our shared goal of helping to deliver the first tobacco-free generation.”

The tobacco industry has long profiled minority communities, particularly African Americans, with intense advertising and promotional efforts. For example, in major cities like Washington D.C., there are up to ten times more tobacco advertisements in African American neighborhoods than in other neighborhoods. There is a disproportionate health burden of tobacco-related morbidity and mortality among African Americans. Each year, approximately 47,000 African Americans die from smoking-related disease. Research has also shown a clear pattern of targeted marketing in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. People living below the poverty level in the U.S. are nearly twice as likely to smoke, compared to those at or above the poverty level.

Additional stats on smoking

Teen smoking of traditional cigarettes in the U.S. reached a historic low of six percent in 2016, but tobacco still remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.

Cigarettes cause over 480,000 deaths annually in the U.S.

Tobacco kills up to half of its users.

LGBTQ young adults, ages 18-24, are nearly twice as likely to smoke as their straight peers.

Individuals with mental illness account for up to 46 percent of cigarettes sold in the U.S.

People living below the poverty level in the U.S. are nearly twice as likely to smoke, compared to those at, or above, the poverty level.

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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.

About the CVS Health Foundation

The CVS Health Foundation is a private charitable organization created by CVS Health that works to build healthier communities, enabling people of all ages to lead healthy, productive lives. The Foundation provides strategic investments to nonprofit partners throughout the U.S. who help increase community-based access to health care for underserved populations, create innovative approaches to chronic disease management and provide tobacco cessation and youth prevention programming. We also invest in scholarship programs that open the pathways to careers in pharmacy to support the academic aspirations of the best and brightest talent in the industry. Our philanthropy also extends to supporting our colleagues' spirit of volunteerism through Volunteer Challenge grants to nonprofits where they donate their time and fundraising efforts. To learn more about the CVS Health Foundation and its giving, visit www.cvshealth.com/social-responsibility.