

## Concerns about Teens Who Vape Turning to Deadly Cigarettes Grow as New CDC Data Show Rise in Youth Cigarette and Combustible Tobacco Use

### Statement of Robin Koval, CEO & President, Truth Initiative

The 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that declines in cigarette smoking remain stalled, with a slight uptick in past 30-day prevalence among high schoolers, from 7.6 percent in 2017 to 8.1 percent in 2018, and the percent of high schoolers using cigarettes and other combustible products like flavored little cigars noticeably increased to 13.9 percent from 12.9 percent in 2017. The data also find more teens are using two or more tobacco products, increasing their exposure to nicotine, with the most popular combination being e-cigarettes and cigarettes.

These new numbers, combined with the astounding 78 percent increase in teen e-cigarette use over the last year contributed to the significant increase in total tobacco use with 1.3 million additional middle and high school current users, an increase of 17.6 percent according to Monitoring the Future. The data underscore a disturbing link between youth e-cigarette use and the four-times-greater likelihood of progression to cigarettes, as reported in [JAMA](#) earlier this month. This is particularly troubling as many of these are low-risk youth who never used cigarettes. The survey released today suggests that e-cigarettes may be a factor in slowing, and perhaps even reversing, progress in the reduction of deadly combustible tobacco use among youth.

Sadly, though not surprising, as the e-cigarette epidemic skyrockets and the prevalence of youth smoking remains steady, JUUL Labs, makers of the number one e-cigarette brand, have joined forces with Altria, makers of the best-selling cigarette brand, Marlboro. The deal sets the stage for more sales of both deadly cigarettes and highly addictive e-cigarettes.

Today's data state that more than four million high school students and 840,000 middle schoolers now vape. This is a public health emergency that cannot be ignored, especially as the tobacco industry and its allies seem set on doing everything in their [power](#) to stop the Food and Drug Administration from doing its job and regulating these products. We call on the FDA to stand firm against industry forces and immediately use its pre-market review and approval authorities to ensure that e-cigarettes like JUUL are not allowed free access to continue to addict youth to nicotine. The FDA must also restrict e-cigarette marketing so that it does not target or appeal to youth and issue product standards eliminating flavors from all tobacco products.

Many of the millions of youth now use e-cigarettes — primarily JUUL — and are asking for help to quit. In response, Truth Initiative® has expanded its highly successful quit-smoking resources to include “This is Quitting,” a [first-of-its kind e-cigarette quit program](#). This innovative and free text message program was created with input from teens, college students and young adults who have attempted to, or successfully, quit e-cigarettes. To access the new e-cigarette quit program, users can simply text “QUIT” to (706) 222-QUIT or can learn more at [thetruth.com](#).