
Incoming FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf must stand up to the tobacco industry and protect youth from nicotine addiction

Statement of Robin Koval, CEO and President, Truth Initiative

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 15, 2022) – We applaud the appointment of Dr. Robert Califf as Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). With this decision, the FDA now has the strong, science-driven leadership needed to take a stand on the risks of commercial nicotine and dangers of youth vaping. Dr. Califf is in a historic position to direct the future of public health, and we look forward to working together to continue to prevent the devastating health consequences of tobacco, still the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.

Not nearly enough has been done from a regulatory standpoint when it comes to confronting the tobacco industry on its unchecked access to America's youth. The most recent data (2021) from the [Monitoring the Future](#) study showed that nearly 20% of high school seniors are current e-cigarette users, while 2021 [National Youth Tobacco Survey data](#) showed that of the high school students who vaped nicotine, 43% did so on more than 20 out of the past 30 days. These findings are strong and disturbing signals that way too many young people remain at risk for a lifetime of nicotine addiction and the harms that come with it. For too long, the tobacco control community and local governments have been leading on this issue in the absence of FDA action. We need, and our young people deserve, a complete and coordinated effort among all regulators to combat the deep pockets of the tobacco industry and their aggressive tactics to recruit new users – who are almost always young people.

As the FDA continues to review the role commercial nicotine products should have in our society, we urge Dr. Califf to follow his previously stated beliefs to enact strict regulations to limit their harm and focus on educating non-smokers and vulnerable populations about the dangers of tobacco. For example, after leaving the FDA, he joined with several other former FDA Commissioners in pushing for a nicotine cap on cigarettes to make them unable to sustain addiction. We hope he pushes this effort forward across all tobacco products as well as highly urgent measures such as removing all non-tobacco flavors from the market, including menthol, taking regulatory action on synthetic nicotine, and moving forward with greater speed and transparency the review of e-cigarette products that remain on the market illegally and which comprise more than 75% of sales.

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