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## Young people join Truth Initiative® to demand action on youth vaping nicotine as mental health issue

*Young activists rally to raise awareness by calling on Capitol Hill decision-makers in Washington, D.C. during Moment of Action for Mental Health*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 27, 2022)** – [Truth Initiative](#), the organization behind the highly effective [truth](#)® youth smoking, vaping and nicotine public education campaign, is gathering young people from across the country in Washington, D.C. today for a [Moment of Action for Mental Health](#). The event, taking place on the National Mall, will call attention to the impact that vaping nicotine is having on youth mental health and demand decision-makers declare it a mental health issue.

The Moment of Action is part of [truth](#)’s latest campaign, [Breath of Stress Air](#), which busts the fantasy that vaping nicotine is a stress reliever and calls out the tobacco industry for promoting e-cigarettes and vaping as a way to deal with stress. When in fact, vaping nicotine can increase stress levels and amplify feelings of anxiety and depression.

As part of the Moment of Action, young activists – including former e-cigarette users – will be taking a symbolic live breath to call attention to the impact that nicotine use is having on youth mental health. Leading up to the Moment of Action, hundreds of thousands of young people showed their support for the effort by “taking breaths” at [thetruth.com/mentalhealth2022](#). While in Washington, D.C., young people are also meeting with Members of Congress, members of the Biden Administration and Admiral Rachel Levine, the Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. They will elevate the discussion around vaping and mental health and call for it to be declared a public health crisis. As momentum builds, young people nationwide can text “**ACTION**” to **88709** to participate.

The Moment of Action comes on the heels of an advisory issued by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy on the state of mental health among young people, in which he called youth mental health an “urgent public health crisis.” At the same time, the latest [2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey](#) shows that youth vaping remains at epidemic levels with more than two million high school and middle school students using e-cigarettes. These [colliding crises](#) are especially troubling given the fact that nicotine can worsen symptoms of [anxiety and depression](#) in addition to the physical health risks associated with its use.



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The Moment of Action for Mental Health event in Washington, D.C. will feature more than a dozen young activists including both former vapers and non-vapers from Alabama, Alaska, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Tennessee and other states who are leading education and awareness efforts about the dangers of vaping nicotine among youth in their communities.

“As a former vaper who has dealt with mental health repercussions amplified by nicotine, I am passionate about sharing my experiences in hopes it can change views on vaping and help others looking to quit,” said Sam, age 20. “I’m excited to be joining in the Moment of Action and hope it will inspire others to learn more about the connection between nicotine and mental health.”

“Now more than ever, it is an important time to address how nicotine affects my generation’s mental health,” said Brooklyn, age 22.

### **truth’s proven-effective campaigns**

The Moment of Action for Mental Health continues **truth’s** latest [\*Breath of Stress Air\*](#) campaign that debunked the marketing of e-cigarettes as stress relievers. It called out the tobacco industry for selling vaping as a way to deal with stress, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. A Truth Initiative survey found that 93% of e-cigarette users said vaping made them feel more stressed, depressed, or anxious, while 90% of those who quit said they felt less stressed, anxious, or depressed.

The *Breath of Stress Air* campaign builds on a larger **truth** effort – [\*It’s Messing with Our Heads: Depression Stick\*](#) – which first exposed the connection between vaping nicotine and youth mental health. It seeks to de-normalize youth vaping by debunking the myth that vaping nicotine can help reduce stress, and to normalize quitting through a free and first-of-its-kind quit vaping text message program, [\*This is Quitting\*](#) from **truth**.

### **Resources to help those looking to quit**

Connecting young people with resources is a key component of the **truth** campaign. This is Quitting from **truth** is a first-of-its-kind text message quit vaping program that is helping more than 440,000 young people on their journey to quit. The program is free and anonymous. Young people can enroll by texting “**DITCHVAPE**” to **88709** to get help. A [\*randomized clinical trial\*](#) found that young



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adults aged 18-24 who used This is Quitting had nearly 40% higher odds of quitting compared to a control group.

Breathing exercises have been proven to help with nicotine cravings that cause stress and anxiety. For this reason, **truth** has launched a partnership with [Breathwrk](#) through This is Quitting. Program users can access six months of free membership to Breathwrk Pro including access to custom breaths to help on their quit journey by texting “**BREATHE**” to **88709**.

For help with quitting vaping or to learn more about the connection between vaping nicotine and mental health, teens and young adults can visit [thetruth.com](http://thetruth.com) for free resources.

### **About Truth Initiative®**

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all young people reject smoking, vaping and nicotine and a future where tobacco and nicotine addiction are a thing of the past. In 2020, we celebrated 20 years of saving lives and preventing millions of youth from smoking. Our impact has helped drive the teen smoking rate down from 23% in 2000 to under 3% in 2021. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**® public education campaign. As youth e-cigarette use threatens to put a new generation at risk for nicotine addiction, we are leading the fight against tobacco and nicotine addiction in all forms. Our rigorous scientific research and policy studies, community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco, and innovation in tobacco dependence treatment are also helping to end one of the most critical public health battles of our time. Based in Washington D.C., our organization, formerly known as the American Legacy Foundation, 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, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org)

### **About truth®**

**truth** is the longest-running and most successful national tobacco prevention campaign for youth and young adults. The campaign delivers the facts about tobacco use and the marketing tactics of the tobacco industry so that young people can make informed choices and influence others to do the same. We are credited with preventing millions of young people from becoming smokers and are equally committed to achieving the same results in ending the youth e-cigarette epidemic, including by helping young people quit with our first-of-its-kind



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quit vaping program for teens and young adults This is Quitting. **truth** is part of Truth Initiative®, a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where young people reject smoking, vaping, and nicotine. Learn more about **truth** and the organization behind it at [thetruth.com](http://thetruth.com) and [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).

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