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**Truth Initiative and EVERFI from Blackbaud Join Forces with the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General to Address the Alarming Trend of Prescription Drug Overdoses among Young People**

*Youth opioid prevention event emphasized the importance of substance abuse prevention education for young people*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. and CHARLESTON, S.C. (October 1, 2024)** – Opioid overdoses among young people have risen steadily in recent years. To address this alarming trend, Truth Initiative, the organization behind **truth**<sup>®</sup>—the nationally recognized and proven-effective youth tobacco and opioid prevention campaigns—EVERFI<sup>®</sup> from Blackbaud<sup>®</sup>, the leader in social impact education, and the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General (OAG) hosted a youth opioid prevention event to empower students with the knowledge to make safe and healthy decisions about prescription drugs and increase understanding of the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit pills.

The event, held at Lower Dauphin High School in Hummelstown, Pennsylvania, on Sept. 30, featured in-depth discussions on opioid misuse, remarks from Pennsylvania Attorney General Michelle Henry, as well as engaging activities that highlighted the importance of youth substance abuse prevention education.

One speaker at the event was Rebekkah Maher, a Recovery Advocate featured in Truth Initiative's "The Truth About Opioids" campaign and a powerful example of resilience and recovery. At 14, Maher became addicted to opioids after they were prescribed to her for an injury and later worked with Truth Initiative to share her story of recovery. "While working to get clean, I was fighting every single day, learning how to love myself, and rediscovering the potential of tomorrow. Long-term recovery is the hardest thing I've ever done — and it's something I'll do for the rest of my life," said Maher. She continues to share her story, hoping to prevent others from experiencing the hardships she endured.

The event at Lower Dauphin High School built upon an ongoing partnership between the OAG, Truth Initiative, and EVERFI to provide students with access to *Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth*, a free, digital curriculum from Truth Initiative and EVERFI that educates students about the dangers associated with misusing prescription medications, including counterfeit drugs containing fentanyl.

"Equipping students with the knowledge and skills to prevent prescription drug misuse is crucial. By providing students with the tools to make safe and healthy



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decisions about prescription drugs and an understanding of the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit pills, we are giving them the power to stay safe and protect others in their communities,” said Amy Taylor, Chief Development and Engagement Officer.

The youth opioid crisis continues to be a serious problem for communities across the U.S., including in Pennsylvania. A potent synthetic opioid, illegally manufactured fentanyl was involved in 84% of the more than 2,200 cases of reported adolescent drug overdose deaths that occurred from 2019 to 2021. The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 12.2% of high school students nationally — and 9% of high school students in Pennsylvania — had misused prescription opioids in their lifetime, with nearly half indicating they had misused them in the past 30 days, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, overdose deaths by counterfeit pills more than doubled from 2019 to 2021, and over half of those who died were age 35 or younger.

“While we may wish it wasn’t necessary, the reality is that we have an obligation to ensure our youth are provided with trusted sources of education on topics like prescription drug safety. To make healthy decisions about their own medication use, students need to understand key concepts related to prescription drugs, safe use, refusal skills, and where to find resources,” said Ellen Patterson, president and general manager, EVERFI from Blackbaud. “Our data indicates that education on this topic increases students’ knowledge and understanding of these concepts, and we are proud to work with Truth Initiative and the Pennsylvania OAG to bring this education to students across the Commonwealth.”

Opioid misuse is a complex issue that needs to be addressed from various perspectives, including in the classroom. *Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth* uses real-world scenarios and an authentic peer-to-peer voice to help students gain a better understanding of the growing youth fentanyl crisis and how to support others in situations involving prescription drug misuse and overdose. Students at the event engaged with the curriculum prior to the event as part of their health class.

“Prescription opioids are highly addictive and pose a risk of being abused, oftentimes by people who begin taking medications for legitimate reasons and those closest to them,” Attorney General Michelle Henry said. “Keeping unused or unneeded drugs out of Pennsylvania communities will always be a top priority



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of my office. I was honored to have a chance to share this message with the students of Lower Dauphin High School, as we have found young people are vulnerable to becoming addicted to these potent drugs.”

### **About Truth Initiative**

Truth Initiative is a national nonprofit public health organization committed to a future free from lifelong addiction, fostering healthier lives and a more resilient nation. Our mission is to prevent youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empower quitting for all. Through our evidence-based, market-leading cessation EX Program and the nationally recognized **truth**<sup>®</sup> public education campaign, we are leading the fight against youth and young adult tobacco use, which threatens to put a new generation at risk of nicotine addiction. 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 continue to contribute to ending one of the most critical public health battles of our time. Based in Washington, D.C., our organization 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](https://truthinitiative.org).

### **About EVERFI from Blackbaud**

EVERFI<sup>®</sup> from Blackbaud<sup>®</sup> (NASDAQ: BLKB) is an international technology company driving social impact through education to address the most challenging issues affecting society ranging from financial wellness to mental health to workplace conduct and other critical topics. Founded in 2008, EVERFI's Impact-as-a-Service<sup>™</sup> solution and digital educational content have reached more than 45 million learners globally. In 2020, the company was recognized as one of the World's Most Innovative Companies by Fast Company and was featured on Fortune Magazine's Impact 20 List. The company was also named to the 2021 GSV EdTech 150, a list of the most transformative growth companies in digital learning. [Blackbaud](https://blackbaud.com) acquired EVERFI in December of 2021. To learn more about EVERFI, please visit [everfi.com](https://everfi.com) or follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/everfi), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/everfi), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/everfi), or [@EVERFI](https://twitter.com/EVERFI).

### **Blackbaud Forward-looking Statements**

Except for historical information, all of the statements, expectations, and assumptions contained in this news release are forward-looking statements that involve a number of risks and uncertainties, including statements regarding expected benefits of products and product features. Although Blackbaud attempts to be accurate in making these forward-looking statements, it is



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**CONTACTS:**

Nicole Dueffert, Truth Initiative, [ndueffert@truthinitiative.org](mailto:ndueffert@truthinitiative.org)

Jennifer Edgerly, EVERFI from Blackbaud, [jedgerly@everfi.com](mailto:jedgerly@everfi.com)

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