
Need for Balancing Youth Protection and Adult Access: The Imperative of FDA's Zyn Authorization

Statement from Kathy Crosby, CEO and President, Truth Initiative®

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 17, 2025) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's authorization of 20 Zyn nicotine pouch products addresses an ongoing need to provide adults who smoke with access to less harmful alternatives to combustible cigarettes. However, this decision also underscores the importance of ensuring that public health progress – marked by recent significant declines in youth tobacco and nicotine use – is not reversed. Helping adults who smoke and protecting youth are not competing priorities – they are shared responsibilities essential to advancing public health.

Nicotine addiction remains a serious public health challenge, particularly for adolescents, whose developing brains are highly susceptible to its harmful effects, and for 18-24 year-olds among whom tobacco use remains high. As the 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) shows, the decline in teen tobacco use is one of the most significant public health achievements of the past decade. It is essential that the introduction of new nicotine products does not repeat the mistakes of the past, such as those seen with youth-appealing flavored e-cigarettes, where marketing and accessibility fueled a surge in youth use.

The FDA and the tobacco industry – including retailers – must be held accountable to ensure these products are marketed and sold legally and responsibly to only adults aged 21 and older, prioritizing public health over profit. That means strict oversight to prevent youth access, protect nicotine-naïve individuals, and uphold the progress that has been achieved in reducing nicotine use and addiction among young people.

At the same time, it is critical to support adults who smoke in their efforts to quit. Data show many addicted adults want to quit but it's very difficult to break nicotine addiction. There is a need for new tools to help people who smoke to transition away from the deadliest products to living completely free from tobacco products. For nearly two decades, Truth Initiative has empowered millions of people of all ages on their quitting journeys through our evidence-based EX[®] Program resource. EX Program provides personalized quit plans, interactive text support, and access to a robust online community, equipping individuals with the tools they need to succeed. Additionally, EX Program Enterprise offers organizations – including employers, health plans, and public health agencies – a



customizable, HIPAA-compliant cessation solution to help create healthier workplaces and communities.

Truth Initiative remains committed to preventing youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empowering quitting for all. Together, we can protect the hard-won progress in youth tobacco prevention and build a healthier, nicotine-free future for all.

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 national public education and prevention campaigns, we are leading the fight against youth and young adult tobacco use, which threatens to put a new generation at risk of lifetime 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.

About EX Program

EX[®] Program is a proven-effective tobacco cessation program, developed by Truth Initiative[®] with Mayo Clinic, that brings together the best evidence-based quitting approaches, interactive digital quitting programs, and the most established online quit community. EX Program has helped millions of youth and adults develop the skills and confidence to successfully quit. Truth Initiative research has shown that EX Program text messages can increase a user's odds of quitting by up to 40%. To learn more, visit exprogram.com.

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