
Young Activists Join with truth® to Demand Action on Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Cigars

Youth and young adults deliver digital petition during in-person meetings with the White House and Congressional members

WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 21, 2024) – In an effort to encourage the Biden Administration to finalize and implement the Food and Drug Administration’s menthol and flavored cigar rules, youth and young adult activists from across the country came together this week in the nation’s capital to raise their voices in support of swift action. As part of the annual **Moment of Action** with [truth®](#), the national public education campaign from Truth Initiative, young people met with the White House and decision makers on Capitol Hill. In addition to being a social justice issue, young people use menthol cigarettes at disproportionately high rates, with more than 40% of youth smokers choosing menthol, according to the [2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey](#). While in D.C., the young activists demanded the Biden Administration put people over politics in the name of public health.

The Moment of Action rallied young people across the country, both on the ground and online. Twenty-seven youth and young adult activists came to Washington, D.C., to meet with the White House. They also participated in 35 meetings with decision makers on Capitol Hill to call for the White House to finalize the proposed menthol and flavored cigar rules. Concurrently, young people across the country participated in a **truth** digital campaign, which included signing an online [petition](#) and engaging with a series of [social videos](#) outlining the devastating impact that menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars have had on Black communities. The videos feature young activists – Jordan and Bryce – speaking with senior leaders in the Black community, including Rev. Horace Sheffield III and Mignonne C. Guy, PhD. Since the petition’s launch, nearly 800 young people have added their names, demanding that the White House act to save lives.

“Removing menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars from the market has potential to advance health equity, protect our nation’s youth, and save lives,” said Amy Taylor, Chief Development and Engagement Officer at Truth Initiative. “We are honored to stand beside these young people to lift up their voices on this important issue and to demand action. We hope that the White House and Congressional leaders listen to them, because they are speaking on behalf of the next generation.”

Menthol cigarettes are easier to smoke, more difficult to quit, and have long been identified as a gateway product to nicotine addiction. Studies show that youth



and young adults are more likely to try a menthol cigarette as their first cigarette and, as a result, are more likely to continue smoking. They have been marketed by the tobacco industry to specific communities, particularly Black Americans and the LGBTQ+ community, fueling health disparities. As a result, Black Americans accounted for 41% of premature deaths attributable to menthol cigarettes between 1980 and 2018, despite representing only 12% of the population. Additionally, nearly 75 percent of youth cigar smokers cite preferred flavors as their reason for choosing to use cigars. Furthermore, flavored cigars are disproportionately used by Black Americans and other underrepresented groups, highlighting the tobacco industry's unrelenting targeting practices toward certain populations.

“I wanted to become a **truth** Ambassador because I saw the effects of menthol cigarettes and tobacco use in my community,” said Jordan, a **truth** Ambassador and participant in this year’s Moment of Action. “I’m proud to be in D.C. for the Moment of Action to raise awareness about the dangers of these products and take our message to our elected officials about the importance of keeping these products out of our stores and our communities.”

Resources to help those looking to quit

Truth Initiative provides support and resources designed specifically for young people to help them quit through its award-winning and lifesaving nationally recognized **truth** campaign. More than 700,000 young people have enrolled in This is Quitting from **truth** — a free and anonymous text message quit vaping program for teens and young adults. A randomized clinical trial found that young adults aged 18-24 who used This is Quitting had nearly 40% higher odds of quitting compared to a control group. For help with quitting vaping, teens and young adults can visit thetruth.com or text “**DITCHVAPE**” to **88709** for free resources. Additional quit resources – including those specific to menthol cigarettes – are available at BecomeAnEX.org.

Take action and learn more

In addition to urging young people to share their stories, **truth** is also inviting young people to turn their activism into art. The [#MentholNotCool Art Challenge](#) is an opportunity for young activists to use their creativity to show support for the menthol rule. Until April 12th, young people between the ages of 18 and 24 can submit their original art for the chance to win a gift card and have their work shared with decision makers. Learn more and submit an original artwork [here](#).



Anyone can join **truth** in taking action to address tobacco in their own communities. To learn more or join the petition, visit thetruth.com/takeaction.

About **truth**[®]

truth is the longest-running proven effective 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 committed to achieving the same results with the youth e-cigarette crisis. As part of this effort, our first-of-its-kind, text message quit vaping program for teens and young adults *This is Quitting*[®] has enrolled over 700,000 young people nationwide since its launch in 2019. **truth** is part of Truth Initiative[®], a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where young people reject smoking and vaping, and anyone can quit. Learn more about **truth** and the organization behind it at thetruth.com and truthinitiative.org.

About Truth Initiative[®]

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all young people reject smoking and vaping, and anyone can quit. Our impact has helped drive youth smoking prevalence down from 23% in 2000 to a historic low of 2% in 2023. Through our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**[®] public education campaign and market leading cessation programs, we are leading the fight as e-cigarette use threatens to put a new generation at risk of nicotine addiction. Our first-of-its-kind, text message quit vaping program *This Is Quitting* has enrolled over 700,000 young people nationwide and our youth e-cigarette prevention curriculum *Vaping: Know the truth*[®] is being used in more than 9,000 schools nationwide. 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 help end 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.

###