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**Public and Pharmacists Urge Walgreens Halt Tobacco Sales Nationwide**  
*Truth Initiative Attends Walgreens Shareholders Meeting to Deliver Petition and Urge the Nation's Second-Largest Pharmacy Chain to go Tobacco-Free*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (Jan. 25, 2019)** - [Truth Initiative](#)<sup>®</sup>, the nonprofit organization behind the youth tobacco prevention [truth](#)<sup>®</sup> campaign, will today attend Walgreens' annual shareholders meeting in New York to urge the company to end tobacco sales in its stores. Truth Initiative will be joined by two pharmacists and a youth advocate who will speak on behalf [of thousands who have signed a petition](#) asking for the removal of deadly tobacco products from store shelves nationwide.

Despite significant progress in reducing the rate of smoking, tobacco still kills more than 540,000 Americans each year. Pharmacies are a trusted source of health information and services; yet, in 2016, more than 50,000 pharmacies still sold tobacco, including Walgreens. Truth Initiative has called for the removal of tobacco products at the shareholders meeting for the last three years. Banning tobacco from pharmacies is supported by public opinion. According to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, 66 percent of U.S. adults favor a ban on tobacco products in pharmacy stores, including nearly half of smokers. Further, according to a [survey conducted by Truth Initiative](#), nearly three-quarters of Walgreens shoppers — 73 percent — reported that they were in favor of the pharmacy chain banning the sale of tobacco products and 27 percent reported that they would shop at Walgreens more often if it stopped selling tobacco products.

“The evidence supporting the removal of tobacco products at Walgreens and all pharmacies is clear,” said Amy Taylor, senior vice president, community and youth engagement at Truth Initiative. “Research has found that Truth Initiative has contributed to the significant decline in youth cigarette use, preventing millions of young people from becoming smokers, including 2.5 million in the past three years alone. Our latest Walgreens effort is key to continuing this trend by helping to keep tobacco products out of young hands and support current smokers trying to quit.”

Pharmacists — including those that currently work at Walgreens — have also spoken out against tobacco sales. The American Pharmacists Association, comprising approximately 62,000 pharmacists, [strongly advocates for a tobacco-free policy](#). To learn more about how pharmacists view the issue, Truth Initiative led a discussion with a group of 29 pharmacists in December 2018, finding that most pharmacists support a restriction on tobacco sales at Walgreens, believing it would make it more difficult/less convenient to purchase tobacco. Further, the majority of pharmacists who work in stores with a ban felt it has had a positive effect on customer health, and those without a ban, including Walgreens pharmacists, felt that having a ban would have a positive effect on customer health.

“We need to let everyone know we are here to improve your health, not damage it,” said one pharmacist who works in a tobacco-free pharmacy. “Pharmacies are places that offer life-saving medications to patients. We should not be selling them harmful tobacco products.”

While Walgreens stopped selling cigarettes at all 17 of its Gainesville, Florida, stores in April 2018 as part of a pilot program, a promising step toward the pharmacy chain removing tobacco from all its stores, it is still the worst offender among several pharmacy chains that were caught selling tobacco products to minors, according to a report published in [JAMA Pediatrics](#). The report found that the Food and Drug Administration caught Walgreens selling tobacco products to minors 1,296 times during 12,587 inspections, or about 1 in 10 (10.3 percent) inspections.

Truth Initiative has long supported tobacco-free pharmacies and has led a series of activism efforts aimed at pharmacies that continue to sell tobacco. More than 12,000 young people, including 5,321 this year, have [signed truth petitions](#) supporting tobacco-free pharmacies, and many have showed up to five protests across the country, including a [zombie-themed protest](#) at the Washington, D.C. flagship Walgreens store.

“Between our zombie protest, thousands of petition signatures, hundreds of phone calls and more than 200 news articles, we are getting Walgreens’ attention,” said Taylor. “We commend CVS and other independent pharmacies for voluntarily eliminating tobacco, but won’t rest until all pharmacies, including Walgreens, remove tobacco from their shelves. This act alone has the potential to save thousands of lives.”

For more information on why pharmacies, including Walgreens, should stop selling tobacco products, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).

#### **About Truth Initiative:**

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization that is inspiring tobacco-free lives and building a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized truth public-education campaign, our rigorous and scientific research and policy studies, and our innovative community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco. The Washington, D.C. -based organization, formerly known as Legacy, 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 about how Truth Initiative speaks, seeks and spreads the truth about tobacco, visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org).