

Schlesinger Law Firm Files Class-Action Lawsuit Against JUUL E-cigarette Manufacturer and Altria Group Inc.

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FORT LAUDERDALE, FL / ACCESSWIRE / April 15, 2019 / Schlesinger Law Firm filed today a class-action lawsuit on behalf of a Sarasota County teenager, age 15, and her parents to redress the nicotine addiction epidemic among youth. The lawsuit is against the e-cigarette company JUUL Labs Inc., and tobacco giant Altria Group, Inc., which owns Philip Morris USA, Inc., the maker of Marlboro, the country's most popular cigarette, and which recently acquired a 35% ownership interest in JUUL.

The lawsuit claims that JUUL and Altria/Philip Morris are violating federal racketeering laws by intentionally exploiting adolescents while falsely denying they are doing so. The complaint highlights the companies' stunning hypocrisy: "weeks after Altria announced it would remove its e-vapor products from the market to address the youth vaping epidemic," Altria revealed its JUUL-acquisition, valued at \$12.8 billion. Pursuant to a services agreement, JUUL will have access to Altria's infrastructure. JUUL will appear alongside Marlboro cigarettes at retail and have access to Philip Morris' smoker's database and regulatory lobbyists.

"JUUL has captured a broad segment of the adolescent and teenage market by applying the same techniques historically used by cigarette makers," said Scott Schlesinger, an attorney at Schlesinger Law Offices in Fort Lauderdale. "The companies tell regulators they are not marketing to that vulnerable age group while they simultaneously and knowingly created a massive increase in youth nicotine addiction."

The plaintiff is addicted to the nicotine in JUUL e-cigarettes, according to the lawsuit.

JUUL'S Big Tobacco youth marketing tactics proved successful. Data from the National Youth Tobacco Survey shows that 78.2% of middle and high school students had been exposed to e-cigarette advertisements. One in five high schoolers used e-cigarettes in 2018. Use among middle schoolers increased eight-fold between 2011 and 2018. JUUL owns three-quarters of the e-cigarette market.

"JUUL is now a part of the culture of being a teenager," said Jonathan Gdanski, an attorney at the Schlesinger firm. "To give you a sense of the problem," Gdanski said, "it is so popular that "JUULing" is now synonymous with vaping." Gdanski maintains that the lawsuit seeks to "prevent future harm to youth, which the industry has long understood to be its only source of replacement smokers."

FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb said in September that e-cigarette use is a "trend among youth we believe has reached epidemic proportions." The agency has proposed ending sales of e-cigarette products in flavors that appeal to children. JUUL has eight flavors that include mango, fruit and crème. The complaint also notes that e-cigarette use is associated with increased risk for conventional cigarette initiation.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Plaintiffs seek damages under the RICO Act and for fraud, product liability and deceptive trade practices. "JUUL knew that JUUL e-cigarettes were not safe for non-smokers, and posed a risk of aggravating addiction in those already addicted to cigarettes," the complaint reads.

ABOUT SCHLESINGER LAW OFFICES

Based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Schlesinger Law Offices is a personal injury law firm dedicated to holding corporations, manufacturers and medical providers accountable for harm caused to members of the public by acts of negligence and misconduct. The firm has a reputation for powerful advocacy and has obtained justice and compensation for hundreds of clients. For more information, log on to www.schlesingerlawoffices.com or call (954) 866-5493.

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