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November 6, 2025

By Federal Express and E-mail

Drew Shenkman, Esq.
Vice President, Legal
CNN
190 Marietta Street N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303

Re: "Chasing Life: Why Teens Just Can't Quit Nicotine" Podcast Episode

Dear Mr. Shenkman:

I am Assistant General Counsel, U.S. Market for Philip Morris International, including its subsidiaries, ("PMI"), and I write on behalf of the U.S. businesses of PMI ("PMI U.S.," "we," "our," "us"). PMI's brands include ZYN nicotine pouches.

I refer to the letter sent by my colleague Sam Dashiell on behalf of PMI U.S. to Sanjay Gupta, Virginia Moseley and Grace Walker of CNN on October 24, which he resent on October 25 to numerous CNN executives¹. PMI U.S.'s letter identified a number of false and misleading statements in the CNN "Chasing Life" podcast episode titled "Why Teens Just Can't Quit Nicotine," released earlier that day (available at <https://www.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/chasing-life/episodes/b9b44928-37bb-11ef-8219-1b589afc7166>, and also available on other platforms, including YouTube) (the "Podcast").

The letter, a copy of which is enclosed, highlights just a few of the most egregious errors in the Podcast, particularly as they relate to PMI U.S. and our brand ZYN. These errors reflect a conspicuous failure by the "Chasing Life" editorial team to adhere to both CNN's mission to stand for "excellence in our journalism," (<https://www.cnn.com/about>), and standard responsible newsroom practices of careful and bias-free reporting and fact-checking. As you will note, PMI U.S.'s letter respectfully requests that CNN promptly correct the identified errors in the Podcast and notify its content distribution partners and audience of those corrections.

However, in the thirteen days since CNN published the Podcast, and PMI U.S. reasonably requested revisions to that story, CNN has failed to make any of the necessary changes, or even formally reply to our letter. Moreover, on October 28, a CNN reporter, Andrea Kane, approached PMI U.S., advising that she is writing an article "based on" the Podcast for CNN's website, and making inquiries that suggest that her story may seek to republish and repackage

¹ Mike McCarthy, Executive Vice President & General Manager; Matthew Hilk, Senior Vice President & Executive Editorial Director; The National Desk email (nationaldesk@cnn.com); Amanda Wills, Chief Content Officer; Eric Sherling, Senior Vice President & Special Events Programming

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many of the same false and misleading statements about PMI U.S. and ZYN that the Podcast does.

Mr. Dashiell informed Ms. Kane of PMI U.S.'s strong objection to the inaccurate and biased premise of her proposed article, and thereafter was connected to Ben Tinker, Vice President of News at CNN. In a conversation with Mr. Dashiell on October 30, Mr. Tinker would not commit to revising the Podcast to remove the erroneous statements about PMI U.S. and ZYN, and requested that PMI U.S. provide specific examples of those statements. Mr. Tinker did agree, however, to hold publication of Ms. Kane's article, pending CNN internal review and follow-up with PMI U.S.

Accordingly, I write to identify for CNN its misstatements in the Podcast, and to again request that CNN correct these statements, including those about PMI U.S. and ZYN. Our expectation is that, following receipt of this letter, CNN will finally undertake the necessary resolution of this matter that we have requested.

For ease of review, I have listed below some examples of the incorrect statements that PMI U.S. has requested that CNN remove from the Podcast, with time codes, and the evidence of their false and misleading nature. Much of this information (other than the time codes) was contained in PMI U.S.'s October 24 letter, and/or raised by Mr. Dashiell in his discussion with Mr. Tinker last week.

Gupta 2:02: "Between 2023 and 2024, teen use of nicotine pouches nearly doubled in one year."

Gupta 26:59: "ZYN, these nicotine pouches that has doubled in terms of usage in 2023 to 2024."

FACT: Per the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"), as reported in the latest published National Youth Tobacco Survey ("NYTS"), the percentage of middle school and high school students using nicotine pouches was 1.5 percent in 2023, (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7244a1.htm>), and 1.8 percent in 2024. (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey-nyts>)² Therefore, the NYTS correctly summarized that "youth nicotine pouch use did not show a statistically significant change from 2023 [to 2024]." (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey-nyts>)

The FDA emphasized a similar point in their press release of January 2025 that accompanied FDA's grant of marketing authorization for all twenty variants of ZYN currently available on the U.S. market, observing that "that youth use of nicotine pouches remains low". (<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-authorizes-marketing-20-zyn-nicotine-pouch-products-after-extensive-scientific-review>)

The Podcast's contrary claim that "[b]etween 2023 and 2024, teen use of nicotine pouches nearly doubled," is not explicitly sourced, so we cannot comment on its accuracy or reliability.

² Refers to current use on one or more days during the past 30 days

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Regardless, CNN erred in not acknowledging in the Podcast the contradictory findings of the FDA and NYTS.

Tucker Carlson clip 2:17: “Once you try this, you're going to get a lot richer. // ZYN? Is that their advertising campaign? // ZYN is not a sin, that's the advertising campaign.”

FACT: None of these statements by Tucker Carlson about ZYN are accurate. Further, notwithstanding Carlson’s approaches, Carlson does not have, and never has had, any connection whatsoever to PMI U.S. or ZYN, and, to the contrary, PMI U.S. has directed Carlson not to make claims about ZYN. Both Carlson and PMI U.S. have discussed this publicly. (E.g., <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2025/02/07/tucker-carlson-nicotine-pouches-00200455?ref=upstrack.com>) Yet, CNN nonetheless leads off the Podcast with a clip that wrongly suggests that Carlson is authorized to promote ZYN and amplifies certain inaccurate statements he has made.

Gupta 17:12: “vaping sort of surged in popularity, peaking, it seemed like right in 2019, so just before the pandemic, and by 2024 has dropped to about a third of that peak, which was the lowest level in a decade. ... but at the same time, a new product sort of emerged. ... ZYN.”

Gupta 17:46: “cigarette smoking peaks starts to come down, vaping starts to go up, that starts to come down and now ZYN, these nicotine pouches. Is that just the way it is, Doc? Like every time we sort of start to get a handle on one product, another one comes along?”

Ling 18:06: “that is the tobacco companies' plan. 20 years ago, the cigarette companies said, we have a problem, people are quitting smoking. How do we stay alive as a business? And their plan was basically to transform themselves into nicotine pharmaceutical companies. And so all of this rolling out the next new products, whether they're heated tobacco products, e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, other smokeless products ... because as long as they get people addicted to nicotine and they can keep producing a new product, right, they're still making money. So it's not a surprise that as vaping drops off in popularity, the nicotine pouches are coming up because there's a whole arsenal of new products that are rolling out.”

These comments build on earlier false statements from Gupta 6:47 and Ling 6:58 and 10:45 that suggest that alternative nicotine products are intended by manufacturers to provide a gateway to smoking.

FACT: Swedish Match North America LLC (a subsidiary of PMI since 2022) launched ZYN in the U.S. in 2014, years before the peak in vape use claimed in the Podcast. ZYN is not a “new product” that was introduced by PMI U.S. (or Swedish Match) to address a drop in vape use. Indeed, PMI U.S.’s business is not negatively affected by a drop in vape use, as PMI U.S. does not sell vape products (or combustible cigarettes) in the U.S. CNN erred in asserting that PMI (or Swedish Match) strategically launched ZYN to compensate for falling vape (and/or cigarette) sales.

FACT: Smoking by youth (and adults) today in the U.S. is at an all-time low. (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth->

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[tobacco-survey-nyts](#) and <https://news.gallup.com/poll/648521/cigarette-smoking-rate-ties-year-low.aspx>) Thus, U.S. government data directly rebuts CNN's expert's claim that vape products are a gateway to cigarette smoking. Indeed, if anything, the data shows that smoke-free products such as nicotine pouches are helping to reduce smoking prevalence. In authorizing ZYN earlier this year as "appropriate for the protection of the public health," the FDA cited "a study showing that a substantial proportion of adults who use cigarette and/or smokeless tobacco products completely switched to the newly authorized nicotine pouch products," i.e., ceased smoking. (<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-authorizes-marketing-20-zyn-nicotine-pouch-products-after-extensive-scientific-review> (emphasis added)) This data is all widely and publicly available, but was altogether ignored by CNN in allowing its expert to circulate inaccurate alarmist information in the Podcast.

Gupta 19:18: "there are these folks that are called ZYNfluencers, so they are literally influencers around ZYN, largely sort of credited for the rise of these nicotine pouches."

FACT: PMI U.S. does not, and has not, paid influencers to endorse ZYN, and PMI U.S. has never authorized any "influencers around ZYN." PMI states this clearly on its website, among other places. (<https://www.pmi.com/media-center/press-releases/press-details?newsId=28291>) The term "ZYNfluencer" has been organically created by the public to describe independent third-parties who provide online content about ZYN, and the term does not reflect PMI U.S.'s business practices or involvement.

Had CNN sought comment from PMI U.S. for the Podcast, as would have been expected in a balanced news report, PMI U.S. would have informed CNN of PMI U.S.'s well-documented responsible marketing practices for ZYN, which the company directs to age 21+ nicotine consumers. (<https://www.uspmi.com/en/21-plus>) If CNN had sought to cover ZYN fairly and accurately, the Podcast should have made it clear that "ZYNfluencers" refers to ZYN users who promote their enthusiasm for ZYN online, unofficially and without participation from PMI U.S.

Ling 20:27: "So, you know, when we prescribe nicotine replacement, you know the low dose is two milligrams and the high dose is four milligrams. ZYN starts at three and has six. So it already starts out stronger than nicotine replacement. And now you can get nine milligrams, twelve milligrams, fifteen milligrams. So all the newer pouches coming out have higher and higher amounts of nicotine in them. So the whole market is going kind of bigger, stronger, cheaper, which again really facilitates addiction."

Ling 33:01³: "Why do you need more than FDA-approved NRT levels, right?"

FACT: ZYN is currently authorized for sale by the FDA only in 3mg and 6mg nicotine variants and not offered in "nine milligrams, twelve milligrams, fifteen milligrams." Furthermore, it bears noting that even 15mg (which, again, is far more nicotine than in any variety of ZYN available in the U.S. today) is less than the 21mg (or stronger) nicotine content of some nicotine replacement therapies available over the counter, without prescription, (such as transdermal patches). (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493148/>)

As CNN and its expert should have known, and disclosed when responsibly reporting on nicotine, the nicotine uptake of nicotine products is not determined by their nicotine

³ Included only in the version of the Podcast on YouTube

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concentration alone, and other factors such as the mode of delivery (e.g., inhalation, oral, transdermal), ritualized usage behavior, individual usage experience and individual metabolism all play a part. In addition, nicotine addiction is complex and multifaceted, with each nicotine-containing product requiring thorough, individualized scientific assessment. Nonetheless, it is worth observing that the FDA concluded, in authorizing ZYN in January this year, that “the abuse liability [addictive potential] of the new products [ZYN] is lower than combusted cigarettes and is similar to smokeless tobacco products.”

(https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/static/searchtobacco/ZYN/PMTA_TPL_PM593-PM612_Zyn_01_13_2025_Redacted.pdf)

Therefore, it is also incorrect to suggest that ZYN is “going kind of bigger [or] stronger which again really facilitates addiction.” CNN erred in giving undue deference to its expert’s oversimplified assertion tying nicotine concentration to addiction, and in failing to undertake even basic fact-checking (or at least disclose to its audience the irrefutable conclusion from that fact checking) that ZYN is not available in “nine milligrams, twelve milligrams [or] fifteen milligrams,” and that the amount of nicotine in ZYN is actually a fraction of the nicotine in many nicotine replacement therapies.

Ling 21:49: “The FDA is taking comments right now on approving ZYN. ... You can tell the FDA, don’t approve ZYN. Or you can say limit the nicotine. Like, why does anyone need 15 milligrams of nicotine in a pouch, right?”

FACT: In January 2025, after nearly five years of review, the FDA authorized the marketing of all twenty ZYN products currently sold in the U.S. as “appropriate for the protection of the public health.” (<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-authorizes-marketing-20-zyn-nicotine-pouch-products-after-extensive-scientific-review>) The FDA open public comment period that the Podcast appears to reference is not for “approving ZYN,” but rather for authorizing marketing ZYN as a modified risk tobacco product with the claim “Using ZYN instead of cigarettes puts you at a lower risk of mouth cancer, heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis.” Further, as noted above, no ZYN format currently available in the U.S. contains anywhere near “15 milligrams of nicotine.” Finally, as a basic fact, the FDA authorizes but does not “approve” any tobacco products.

Thus, in one short statement, CNN erred three times: first, in failing to acknowledge that the FDA concluded ten months ago that ZYN is “appropriate for the protection of the public health” and authorized its marketing in the United States; second, in again claiming that ZYN contains as much as two and half to five times more nicotine than it actually contains; and third, in misstating in very fundamental ways how the FDA and the applicable regulatory regime operates.

In short, the narrative that CNN has created in the Podcast, namely, that PMI U.S. and our brand ZYN (along with other unnamed tobacco companies) is actively engaged in trying to market its products to persons below the legal age, and that PMI U.S. is seeking FDA authorization for ZYN pouches that contain as much as 15 milligrams of nicotine -- to allegedly hook users (both existing and new) on pouches, vapes, cigarettes and other nicotine-containing products -- has no basis in reality. It is a story that is refuted by multiple prominent government and media reports, all of which CNN inexplicably has, at best, overlooked, and, at worst, deliberately ignored.

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PMI U.S. reasonably expects the many misstatements, not the least about PMI U.S. and ZYN, in the Podcast to be corrected without further delay, as the Podcast (both the audio and transcript) now has been live for almost two weeks. We acknowledge the possibility that the mistakes in the Podcast may have been inadvertent and, accordingly, we are pressing at this time only for prompt correction of the story. We also expect that if CNN intends to proceed with the article by Ms. Kane (or any other journalist), that the errors identified in this letter will not be repeated.

Notwithstanding that it is tangential to our complaint about the Podcast, we also take this opportunity to acknowledge that our letter to CNN of October 24 inadvertently contained an inaccurate reference to a CNN editorial policy. To address that error, we have corrected the letter on PMI's website and social media channels. Enclosed with this letter is the updated version. We trust that this act of ownership, accountability and good faith will be reflected by CNN in responding to its own reporting errors.

As before, we will make this letter available to the public via PMI websites and social media channels.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to CNN's correction of the Podcast, as requested, in full.

We reserve all rights.

Sincerely,



J.P. Scholtes
Assistant General Counsel, U.S. Market

Enclosure

CC: Ben Tinker, Vice President of News, CNN

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*This letter has been updated from the original version to
remove references to CNN's editorial policy.*

October 24, 2025

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Virginia Moseley, Grace Walker
190 Marietta St NW
Atlanta, GA 30303



Dear Dr. Sanjay Gupta and Virginia Moseley, Grace Walker, and others:

We, at the U.S. businesses of Philip Morris International (“PMI U.S.”), appreciate that you share our goal of reducing smoking rates and ensuring that anyone under the age of 21 does not have access to any nicotine product. As you mention in your recent podcast, the current landscape is complex due to many factors, and we welcome a fact-based dialogue rooted in science to further underscore the role of smoke-free products in reducing tobacco-related harm and the tremendous public health benefits that could be achieved as a result.

However, regarding your recent podcast “[Why Teens Just Can't Quit Nicotine](#)” published on October 24, 2025, we are writing to provide both a fact-based overview of our nicotine pouch product, ZYN, and identify some significant factual errors and misleading statements and request that you correct these immediately.

We require that the segment of the Podcast relating to ZYN posted on CNN’s website, owned digital channels, and third-party platforms is immediately removed from publication, corrected, and republished with appropriate factual corrections.

PMI U.S.’s press office was not contacted before this story was published or allowed to respond to any of the allegations or offered a right to reply to the significant inaccuracies.

The focus on ZYN and lack of any other nicotine pouch brands being mentioned leads any reasonable listener to draw the incorrect conclusion that all or the vast majority of the allegations discussed during the segment relate to ZYN.

In the interests of time and brevity, we have not commented on each of the false, inaccurate, and misleading statements mentioned in the Podcast, but reserve the right to do so.

1. A proper, fact-based overview of ZYN.

Swedish Match, which became a subsidiary of Philip Morris International (“PMI”) following our acquisition in late 2022, first launched ZYN in 2014 as a better alternative for legal-age nicotine consumers who would otherwise continue smoking—the most harmful form of nicotine

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consumption—or using other traditional tobacco products. ZYN was introduced as an evolution of tobacco-leaf containing snus which has been around for many decades.

In addition to nicotine salt currently derived from tobacco, ZYN contains food-grade ingredients. These include a granulation agent, fillers, pH balancers, sweeteners and flavorings.

In January 2025, [FDA authorized](#) the marketing of all 20 ZYN products currently sold in the U.S. as “*appropriate for the protection of the public health*” through the premarket tobacco product application pathway (PMTA).

A [premarket tobacco product application \(PMTA\)](#) can be submitted by any person for any [new tobacco product](#) seeking an FDA marketing order, under [section 910\(b\) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act \(FD&C Act\)](#). A PMTA must provide scientific data that demonstrates a product is appropriate for the protection of public health.

Therefore, it is informative to highlight some of the relevant findings from the FDA about ZYN in its extensive (nearly five-year long) [scientific review](#).

As [noted](#) by Matthew Farrelly, Ph.D., director of the Office of Science in the FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products, in the agency’s announcement of the PMTA authorization: “*To receive marketing authorizations, the FDA must have sufficient evidence that the new products offer greater benefits to population health than risks. In this case, the data show that these nicotine pouch products meet that bar by benefiting adults who use cigarettes and/or smokeless tobacco products and completely switch to these products.*”

In its press release, [FDA stated](#): “*As part of its evaluation, the FDA reviewed data regarding youth risk and found that youth use of nicotine pouches remains low despite growing sales in recent years.*” For awareness, and as we [shared in April](#), 39 percent of ZYN users are between the ages of 30-39, 31 percent are aged 40-49, with the remainder being 21-29 and 50+ years of age.

It's also important to note other [FDA conclusions](#) from the agency’s review of the totality of evidence:

- “*The toxicology review concludes that cigarette users who switch completely to the new products are expected to experience reduced risk of cancer, respiratory toxicity, and cardiovascular toxicity.*” ([pg 51](#))
- “*...based on evidence suggesting the potential for reduction in lung cancer risk following significant reduction in CPD [cigarettes per day], the new products may also post a benefit to adults who switch and significantly reduce their cigarette use.*” ([pg 57](#))
- “*...the social science review concluded that appeal and likelihood to buy for the new products were low among former tobacco users and never-users, regardless of age.*” ([pg 51](#))

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- *“Finally, the new products’ potential health benefits to adult tobacco product users are not outweighed by risks to nonusers, including youth.” ([pg 54](#))*

2. Allegations made by yourself and Dr. Pamela Ling about ZYN’s intended purpose, including numerous unsubstantiated allegations that ZYN is marketed to children.

There is no ploy as you both suggest. We have *always* been clear that those below the legal age should not have access to or use tobacco or nicotine products. We are also clear that those who are concerned about their health should stop, or never start, using nicotine products as they are addictive and not risk-free. For legal-age adults who would otherwise continue smoking or use traditional tobacco products, what matters most is switching to a better alternative.

We know that our ability to help adults move away from smoking and traditional tobacco products hinges on our ability to help keep our smoke-free products out of the hands of anyone under 21 years old.

PMI and our affiliates go above and beyond what’s required by law to ensure our products are used only by their intended audience: current 21+ nicotine consumers. These responsible marketing practices include but are not limited to:

- We direct our marketing to existing 21+-aged smokers and nicotine consumers.
- We limit our own social media presence to platforms that enable age-restricted controls.
- We mandate that our advertising features only individuals aged 35 or older.
- We don’t pay social media influencers to endorse our products.
- We invest in exploring new technologies, such as TruAge®, to further limit access to nicotine products by those under 21.
- Our [10-point approach](#) incorporates responsible marketing practices, retail support programs, real-world monitoring, and a call for collective action to make smoke-free nicotine products available only to consumers aged 21 and older.
 - For instance, we require online age verification (21+) for our branded websites, deploying trusted third-party systems to independently confirm the age of every visitor.

For your awareness and in addition the points above on responsible marketing, PMI U.S. does not, has not and never will, sell combusted cigarettes in the United States. PMI U.S. had no business in the U.S. before the acquisition of Swedish Match in late 2022.

In fact, PMI was the first major company to announce in 2016 a vision to move away from cigarettes by delivering a smoke-free future. Our portfolio of smoke-free products like ZYN are

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part of that harm reduction strategy to offer legal-age smokers better alternatives to burning tobacco.

Efforts by public health, regulators, *and* the industry are seeing real impacts. According to the CDC, in [2019](#), 23 percent of youth surveyed reported using one or more tobacco product in the past 30 days, and, by [2024](#), that rate had fallen to 8.1 percent — a decrease of 65 percent. That is incredible progress, and the goal is to see even more progress over coming years.

Additionally, smoking rates among [youth](#) and [adults](#) today are at all-time lows.

3. Ling comments that FDA is taking public comments on “approving ZYN” and implies that ZYN is available in 15 milligrams per pouch.

As noted above, FDA authorized ZYN as “appropriate for the protection of the public health” in January 2025. The open public comment period Ling references is for ZYN’s application to be marketed to current legal-age nicotine consumers as a modified risk tobacco product (MRTP). For example, last year, our *General* snus products received an [MRTP renewal](#) to continue being marketed to legal-age nicotine consumers with the claim, “*Using General Snus instead of cigarettes puts you at a lower risk of mouth cancer, heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis.*”

[Per the FDA](#), in order to reach a decision to authorize marketing of a proposed MRTP, FDA must consider under [section 911\(g\)\(4\)](#):

- The relative health risks to individuals of the tobacco product that is the subject of the application
- The increased or decreased likelihood that existing users of tobacco products who would otherwise stop using such products will switch to the tobacco product that is the subject of the application
- The increased or decreased likelihood that persons who do not use tobacco products will start using the tobacco product that is the subject of the application
- The risks and benefits to persons from the use of the tobacco product that is the subject of the application as compared to the use of products for smoking cessation approved as medical products to treat nicotine dependence
- Comments, data, and information submitted by interested persons

Please also note that the FDA does not “approve” any tobacco or nicotine consumer product, and that ZYN is not sold in the 15mg format as Ling implies.

4. Youth usage of nicotine pouches data cited in the podcast is mischaracterized.

The data cited appears to be from [one study](#) that has been pitched, likely to you, and several other news organizations. It should be noted, as acknowledged by its authors, that the study has several limitations, including cross-sectional design, self-report reliance, and small sample sizes for current pouch use and other characteristics. It should also be noted that the data used to conduct this study was published prior to FDA authorization when, again, the agency

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concluded “As part of its evaluation, the FDA reviewed data regarding youth risk and found that youth use of nicotine pouches remains low despite growing sales in recent years.”

Additionally, to ensure proper context and to avoid reporting to your audience the conclusion of one, limited study as objective fact, it should be noted that in 2023, youth use of nicotine pouches was [1.5 percent](#) and was [1.8 percent](#) in 2024, to which the [FDA stated](#), “...youth nicotine pouch use did not show a statistically significant change...”

In conclusion, we hope these changes will be clearly highlighted and consistently conveyed in your reporting so your viewers can assess complete and accurate information on this topic.

Where you or CNN have distributed content to third parties, we request that you notify them immediately and ensure that corrections are published with due prominence across all channels.

Additionally, we wish to remind you that in keeping with PMI's commitment to fostering open and transparent dialogue, we will make all of our correspondence regarding the erroneous information you have published available to the public via our website and through our owned media channels. All rights are reserved. Please confirm receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

Sam Dashiell
Manager, Press Office, U.S.
Philip Morris International