

Speech Delta 8 THC

Hillsborough County BOCC

March 23, 2022

Good morning Commissioners

I'm Ellen Snelling Board Chair of the Hillsborough County Anti Drug Alliance and parent of a daughter in recovery.

I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your concern and attention to this very disturbing drug threat. I especially want to thank Commissioner Stacy White for taking the time to investigate complaints about Delta 8 sales in Hillsborough County and placing this item on the agenda today.

What is Delta 8? Is it a new airlines? A sorority perhaps? No, unfortunately Delta 8 THC is a variant of Delta 9 THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. Delta 8 is the latest drug trend that our children and grand children know about, but parents and grandparents have been left in the dark.

I found out about Delta 8 when I saw a news story about a family that was visiting from Ohio in December. This family spent the day visiting the sponge docks in Tarpon Springs. At the end of the day, they stopped at Groovy Smoothie. The server asked if they wanted regular smoothies or "cannabinoid enhanced". The mother said no cannabis please, I have a young child. The little boy decided on a cake pop. Later that night, the child started screaming and crying and began shaking and twitching. The mom knew something was wrong and thought he might be having seizures. She rushed the 3 year old to Advent Health Emergency Room. After testing was completed, the child was diagnosed with "marijuana overdose". The mother was shocked but remembered the smoothie store. Turns out the server gave the child the wrong cake pop. The little boy got the Delta 8 THC laced treat! This is NOT how we want tourists to remember their vacation to Florida!

Recreational marijuana isn't legal in Florida. Medical marijuana is legal but requires a doctors order, is highly regulated and sold only in licensed dispensaries.

How could a child be given a cannabis infused treat at a smoothie shop? Welcome to the wild world of Delta 8 THC, THC derived from hemp that is "legal" because of a loophole in the Farm Bill which was passed in 2018.

Florida allows farmers to grow hemp and produce hemp products such as CBD. There are strict regulations-- but none address synthetic cannabinoids like Delta 8 THC, Delta 10 THC and THC-O that are derived from CBD using a chemical process involving solvents and acids. These new THC derivatives are not natural at all, they are synthetic chemicals. They are very similar to Delta 9 THC, the intoxicating ingredient of marijuana. Delta 8 and other forms of THC are intoxicating and impairing. They can impair driving ability and cause DUI crashes, poison our children and cause psychosis. Yet, in Florida, these unregulated products are LEGAL. No testing for contaminants. No minimum sale age. Fruit flavors, gummy bears, bright wrappers that are attractive to children- all allowed.

Since I became aware of Delta 8, I visited several stores and purchased Delta 8 candy to help demonstrate how much these drugs look like children's favorite candy. Look at the red pack of regular Skittles and compare it to the blue pack of "medicated" Skittles. They look almost exactly the same! How could a child tell the difference? If a child sees a bright blue pack of Delta 8 "medicated" Skittles in their home, they would likely eat the whole thing! One package contains 250 mg Delta 8 THC which would send a young child to the ER!

I wondered how many other children have been sickened by Delta 8. I contacted the Florida Poison Information Center at TGH and found that 179 exposures to Delta 8 were reported in Florida in 2021. 76 of these cases were children. We must take steps to regulate or ban this drug protect our kids!

Legal medical marijuana edibles have very strict regulations. Here is an excerpt from FL statute 381.986 "Edibles may not be attractive to children; be manufactured in the shape of humans, cartoons, or animals; be manufactured in a form that bears any reasonable resemblance to products available for consumption as commercially available candy; or contain any color additives. Edible receptacles must be plain, opaque, and white without depictions of the product or images. The receptacle must also include a list of all the edible's

ingredients, storage instructions, an expiration date, a legible and prominent warning to keep away from children and pets". **Delta 8 'medicated' candies do not meet any of these requirements that were carefully crafted by DOH to ensure that medical marijuana products are safe!**

We have made so much progress with youth tobacco and vaping prevention over the years. Candy and fruit flavors are no longer allowed after much hard work and advocacy by prevention coalitions. The tobacco age 21 law finally passed. Fast forward to 2022 and now we have THC laced Skittles and Nerds sold in neighborhood convenience stores, gas stations with no age limits. This is a very dangerous trend and reminds me of the K2, Spice and Bath Salts epidemic. Those products were sold in bright colorful packaging with cartoon characters like Scooby Doo in convenience stores. Completely unregulated and children were harmed. We can't let this happen again!

I am so thankful that the Hillsborough County Commission, County Attorney, Code Enforcement and Consumer Protection is investigating the sales of Delta 8 THC and working on ways to educate parents, store managers and the public about this potentially dangerous drug.

The Hillsborough County Anti Drug Alliance is ready and willing to help in any way we can. We have powerpoint presentations and other resources to help educate the public as well as research on legislation in the 20 states that have regulated or banned sales of delta 8.

Thank you!