

Cannabis Product or Not?



California, along with the rest of the nation, is experiencing an explosion of children being rushed to emergency departments due to accidental ingestion/overconsumption of psychoactive cannabis products that often mimic some of their favorite brands of candy, soda, or snacks. Don't believe us?

Do you think a child could distinguish these cannabis products from the commonly sold ones or characters they are mimicking?

Legally Sold Cannabis Products



MacFlurry: Flower. Imitates popular fast food chain dessert and it's branding (logo, product colors, graphics), association with ice cream flavoring.



Cocoa Pebbles: Flower. Prominent display of kid friendly imagery, insinuates chocolate flavor, imitates popular cereal marketed to children, use of bright green/orange colors.



Bobbi Hyll: Flower. Depiction of youth friendly imagery, imitates popular animated tv show, it's branding (logo, colors), and characters, use of bright colors & cannabis plant graphic.



Purple Smerf: Flower. Likeness to classic children's cartoon/movie franchise, imitates name, logo and mushroom house imagery. Name of brand, Yogi Baer, is a variant of the name of a popular cartoon character.



Chips: Description of cheese and onion flavors prominently featured, imitates Funyuns and Fritos chips, depiction of famous artist and their popular phrasing style.



Sweet Treats: Packaging and product imitates commonly sold kids rice crispy treat/cereal, features flavor description, contains multiple doses (10/package) not physically separated, use of bright colors.



Gummies: Prominent display of fruits and flavors, including tropical, marketed as having a great taste and being healthy (vegan, gluten free).



Blunts: Flavor description prominently featured, references specific type of chocolate product. **Concentrates:** High potency product, imitates Skittles (Zkittlez), features images of candy and implies "juiciness," use of bright colors.



Beverages: Each can, a normal drink size, has ten doses of cannabis. Arnie's depicts a cartoon character, fruits images and a rocketship, and use bright colors. "Keef Orange Kush" imitates Fanta Orange soda.

The Problem

Due to systemic regulatory failures, California has experienced the proliferation of hundreds of legal cannabis products with characteristics of candies and foods known to attract children and youth. This has led to:

- Annual cannabis exposures reported to California Poison Control increased from below 200 in 2010 to over 1600 by 2020; 50% involved children, half below age 12; There were only 16 total reported gummy exposures between 2010 and 2015 vs. 409 in 2020 alone.¹
- Cannabis-related emergency department visits in California increased by 75% between 2016 and 2020, mainly involving the consumption of plant material, followed by edibles, concentrates and vaping products, demonstrating that the problem extends beyond just edibles.²
- At Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego, children under age 10 testing positive for THC quadrupled since 2016, mostly from edibles, of which three quarters were from candies or gummies. Half led to hospitalization and one in ten to intensive care.²
- Widespread vaping epidemic of high THC cannabis products marketed as flavored in CA schools.

1. Roth W, Tam M, Bi C, Kim J, Lewis J, Ho R, Apollonio DE. Changes in California cannabis exposures following recreational legalization and the COVID-19 pandemic. Clin Toxicol (Phila). 2022 May; 60(5):632-638. doi: 10.1080/15563650.2021.2006212. Epub 2021 Dec 6. PMID: 34871128.

2. Marijuana Prevention Initiative. (2023). California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Report: Marijuana's Impact on California 2022. Center for Community Research. <https://www.ccrconsulting.org/media/attachments/2023/02/07/california-marijuana-impact-report-2022-final.pdf>.

The Solution: The Cannabis Candy Child Safety Act

AB 1207 (Irwin) will honor the promise and intent of Prop 64 to keep cannabis and its products out of the hands and bodies of our children. The bill will more clearly define and prohibit cannabis products, foods, packaging and marketing that is attractive to children and youth.

The bill is supported by dozens of organizations and individuals representing pediatricians, parents, emergency physicians, public health, youth, and substance use prevention professionals. Key supporters include the California American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Emergency Physicians - California Chapter, the Public Health Institute and Youth Forward.



Examples of Canadian products with plain packaging.



Connecticut example of plain packaging



Better is possible: Canada, CT, MA and NJ have already put in place plain packaging practices for cannabis products, AB1207 is far more modest, just curbing some of the most egregious practices in California.

AB 1207: Putting the Health & Wellbeing of California's Children 1st

Child exposure to and consumption of cannabis is neither necessary nor an acceptable by-product of a legal cannabis market. Kids should never get sick because they mistakenly ingested a cannabis product nearly indistinguishable from some of their favorite brands of candy, soda, and snacks. Teens should not be tempted to start use with apple banana joints or vapes. The cannabis industry can flourish without marketing products that are clearly attractive to children.

AB 1207 seeks to make certain minimum changes needed to shape a safer legal cannabis market that does not drive up consumption and protects California's families, children and youth, communities, schools and their future!