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# Several Students Have Been Hospitalized After Consuming Marijuana Edibles on School Campuses; Officials Call For Holistic Approach to Problem

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Education, health and law enforcement officials on Wednesday told members of the Committee on Health, Human Services and Hospitals that as of March, the V.I. Department of Education learned that students are using marijuana edibles and a task force has been established to deal with the problem.

Asst. D.O.E. Commissioner Victor Somme III provided testimony on underage illegal substance use in public schools, specifically the use of edibles, and said that having grasped the significance and impact of the problem, D.O.E. immediately partnered with the V.I. Dept. of Health which is the lead agency on substance abuse, and the V.I. Police Department, which addresses juvenile offenses.

“As a result, an Edibles Task Force was formed among the three lead agencies... with support from other relevant agencies including the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs and the Department of Human Services,” stated Mr. Somme. “The task force meets virtually every Monday since the edibles crisis began surfacing on Department of Education public high school campuses in March of this year.”

The meetings are to plan and execute actions to inform and educate students, faculty, staff, parents, and the wider community about the dangers of edibles consumption, according to task force officials.

Since March several students have been hospitalized after consuming edibles, and those students were subsequently suspended after an investigation was conducted, Mr. Somme revealed. It was explained to the committee that students who are caught with edibles go through a due process hearing at the school level.

Further investigations are often conducted but it's difficult to determine the amount of THC consumed because by the time the students are identified as victims of edible consumption, the packaging is already discarded, Mr. Somme said.

He described the consumption of edibles as a growing problem among students that are in the early stages of a crisis. “One student is too much,” he told Senator Samuel Carrion who was seeking clarity after the word crisis was used to describe the seriousness of that form of substance abuse.

Recently, Asst. Health Commissioner Dr. Nicole Craigwell-Syms [disclosed](#) that there is growing evidence that young people are abusing cannabis/marijuana edibles. She said young people in schools are using the edibles without understanding the side and possible long-term effects thereof. These edibles look, and in some instances taste like candy, she said.

Her observation was pointed out by Mr. Somme during his testimony. He explained that edibles are food or drink products that typically contain the chemicals found in the cannabis plant. Cannabis edibles may look very similar to genuine products because they often appear in similar packaging to branded products and children may not know the difference.

Officials said that besides students, there is also a need to educate parents and the wider public about cannabis edibles.

“This issue is not a Department of Education issue, but rather one that is indicative of a larger problem within our community that is affecting our school campuses,” Mr. Somme said. “We implore the village— parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, everyone — to get involved and play a role in keeping harmful and illegal substances away from young people. We are proud to have collaborated with several government entities to tackle this matter.”