

Hip-Hop Endorsing Chronic Candy Draws Fire

Written by Robert ID1555

Saturday, 18 June 2005 06:18 -

Marijuana-flavored lollipops may seem an unlikely product, but sugary treats with weed-inspired flavors such as Purple Haze, Acapulco Gold and Rasta are appearing on the shelves of convenience stores and hip-hop smoke shops nationwide.

Marketers call them a harmless novelty. Anti-drug advocates say the candies encourage people, particularly teens and young children, to smoke pot.

The Chronic Candys Web site features an endorsement from rap artist and hip-hop rap producer Warren G. The site also includes photos of hip-hop rap artist Snoop Dogg wearing a Chronic Candy cap and actor Vern Troyer - Mini Me from the "Austin Powers" movies - eating one of the lollipops.

"This kind of thing is reprehensible," said state Sen. Vincent Fort, an Atlanta lawmaker who has organized demonstrations against the candy. "It's nothing but dope candy and that's nothing we need to be training our children to do."

Several companies offer an array of lollipops, gum drops and other candies flavored with hemp oil, which gives the sweets an oily, grassy taste marketers say is similar to the flavor of smoking marijuana - but with none of the narcotic effects.

While the candies have caught the attention of government and law enforcement officials across the country, there's nothing even questionable about their legality. Hemp oil is used in products ranging from health food to beauty supplies.

And all the companies contend their candies are geared toward adults and that they advise retailers to sell the candy only to people 18 and older.

"There are more than 70 million people in the United States who smoke marijuana. We're catering to the audience of people who are in that smoking culture," said Rick Watkins, marketing director for Corona, Calif.-based Chronic Candy, which uses the slogan: "Every lick is

Hip-Hop Endorsing Chronic Candy Draws Fire

Written by Robert ID1555

Saturday, 18 June 2005 06:18 -

like taking a hit."

Hydro Blunts, which was founded in Corona, Calif., and now has its main distribution center in Atlanta, markets marijuana-flavored Kronic Kandy, which is advertised as "a favorite among people who enjoy smoking blunts/cigars."

"Basically, our Kronic Kandy is part of a lifestyle, like hip hop and rap music," said Tony Sosa, head of Hydro Blunts.

But Sosa claims another market as well.

"In our research we have found our Kronic Kandy is mostly used by customers trying to kick the habit of using the illegal drug marijuana," said Sosa, whose company also sells flavored rolling papers. "It has the flavor and essence, without any of the pharmacological ingredients."

Critics don't buy that argument, citing the kind of marketing on Chronic Candy's Web site, which shows video of people apparently smoking marijuana and a warehouse with hundreds of marijuana plants.

"It's pretty clear to see what they're trying to appeal to," said Pat Shea, of Cary, N.C., Southeast program director for the anti-drug DARE program. "They want to appeal to the wannabe's. We always say that the wannabe's are going-to-be's."

In New York City, councilwoman Margarita Lopez said she saw the candy popping up at convenience stores near schools in her district, which includes the city's Lower East Side and East Village.

"It was something that exploded in front of my eyes," said Lopez, a Democrat who is chairwoman of the council's committee on mental health and substance abuse.

Hip-Hop Endorsing Chronic Candy Draws Fire

Written by Robert ID1555

Saturday, 18 June 2005 06:18 -

She has introduced a resolution condemning the candies, and plans to hold hearings on the subject this summer.

"The whole logic they use to talk about the candy not being marketed to young people is just baloney," Lopez said. "We know what they are doing and what they are doing is glorifying substance abuse."

In Georgia, Fort - a Democrat - says his community demonstrations have persuaded several convenience store companies to remove the product from their shelves. He's working on legislation addressing the candies, but says he's not sure whether government officials can ban the sale of a product that doesn't actually contain a controlled substance.

The city council in Douglasville, a suburb west of Atlanta, recently passed a resolution voicing its opposition to the candies.

"This is nowhere near something we want for our kids," said Mayor pro-tem Henry Mitchell III, who sponsored the resolution after hearing complaints from constituents.

At Junkman's Daughter, an eclectic novelty shop in Atlanta's Little Five Points shopping district, the suckers are sold from a plastic bucket with a marijuana leaf on its label. The bucket is separate from other candies and sits near a cash register on an elevated counter that would be too high for children to reach.

Owner Pam Majors said she considers the item a novelty like many of the other gifts the store sells - from Elvis Presley Pez dispensers and hula lamps to action figures of the rock band KISS.

"We've got probably every weird kind of candy there is in here," said Majors, who says she hasn't heard customer complaints about the hemp candy. "If it was anything you could get high off of, we wouldn't carry it, obviously."

Hip-Hop Endorsing Chronic Candy Draws Fire

Written by Robert ID1555

Saturday, 18 June 2005 06:18 -

Sosa said Kronic Kandy, which is made in the Netherlands, is available in stores all over the country. He said he's open to working with government and community leaders to make sure it's sold only to adults, but feels unfairly attacked.

"Our candy is 100 percent legal," Sosa said. "It's FDA-approved and kosher."

ON THE NET

Hydro Blunts Inc., <http://www.hydroblunts.com>

Chronic Candy, <http://www.chroniccandy.com>