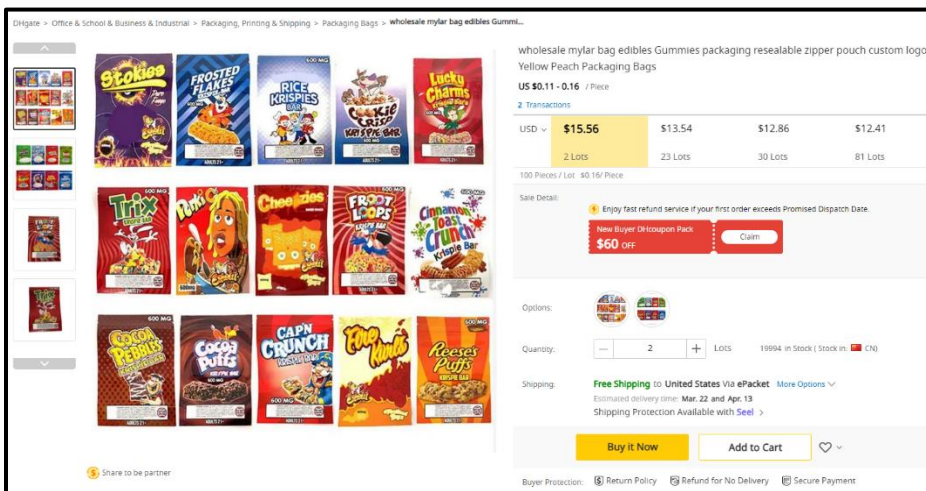
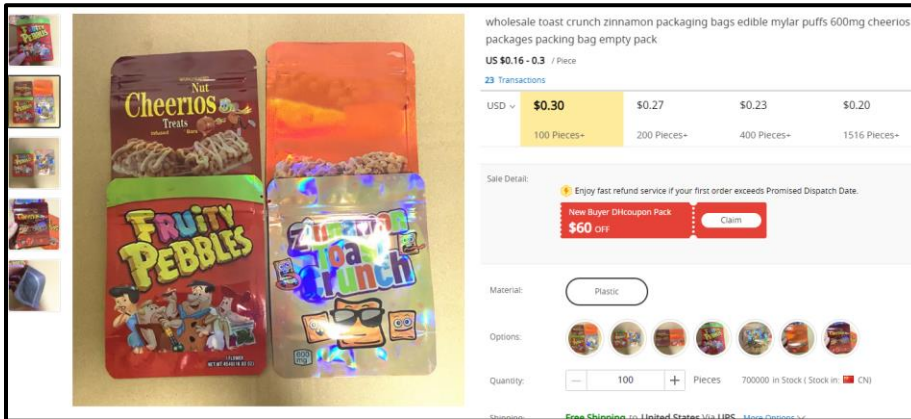

Testimony of Mike Geise**Chief Intellectual Property Counsel, General Mills****In support of MN SF3623, prohibiting sale of empty packaging that would violate MN cannabis law****Hearing March 12, 2024**

Dear Chair Klein, and Members of the Commerce and Consumer Protection committee, thank you for having me here to testify today. And thank you Chair Klein and Sen. Rest for bringing forward this important legislation.

- My name is Mike Geise, and I am the Chief Intellectual Property Counsel at General Mills
- General Mills is a Fortune 500 food company based in Golden Valley, MN. We make food the world loves - beloved household brands including Cheerios, Betty Crocker, Old El Paso, Annie's, and pertinent to today's discussion, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Trix, and other cereals and snacks well known to families, including children.
- I'm here today because General Mills has been actively working with law enforcement in instances where marijuana edibles have been sold in packaging that illegally uses our brands and logos and sometimes adulterated versions of our actual products.
- Sellers of marijuana edibles purchase pre-printed bags with our Company's brand imagery on them, fill the bags with marijuana-laced consumables, and then sell the product to consumers.
 - Between January 2021 and February 2022, poison control centers across the country fielded 2,362 calls regarding THC exposure. Of those reports, 41% involved pediatric patients. An overwhelming 82% of all unintentional exposure cases involved children.
 - General Mills and our peer food makers spend millions of dollars every year to ensure that our foods meet stringent safety standards. When the public sees our brands on a product, they rightly expect that it is safe to consume. Unfortunately, the makers of this packaging do not hold themselves to the same standards.
 - The use of General Mills brands not only gives the false impression that these products come from us, even though we would never allow our brands to be used like this, as it dangerously misleads the public into believing that there is a reputable food safety assurance that comes with these products.
 - Minnesota's new cannabis law prohibits the sale of cannabis in packaging like this.
 - However, there is a loophole a mile wide: it's not illegal to manufacture or sell the empty bags, preprinted and ready to fill. The legislation presented today seeks to help close that loophole by prohibiting the sale of **empty** bags.
 - This is a very narrow fix scoped to packaging that, once filled, would violate the cannabis law as passed last year.
 - Some online retailers, like Amazon, have been responsive when we flag a problematic vendor or listing on their platform. However, others have been less responsive. This includes DHGate, a China-based online retailer. Simply search "mylar bags" on DHGate and you'll see how quickly these bags pop up, copying our brands or those of major candy makers. Written testimony includes screen shots taken just last Friday.
 - By making the sale of such bags illegal, we take steps to shut off the supply of packaging.
 - As more states set up legal marijuana markets, now is the time to take this extra step to protect your constituents – especially children – from the ingestion risks posed by copycat edibles.

Thank you very much and I welcome your questions.

Screenshots from DHGate.com search results for “mylar bags” – retrieved Friday March 8, 2024



Examples to be passed around:

