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PRESS RELEASE

Statement on Drug-Laced Treats

Belmopan, April 25, 2023.

The Office of the Prime Minister has instructed that a full and thorough investigation be conducted to determine the source of some sweet treats, confirmed by testing to be laced with marijuana, that were ingested by a number of children and adults admitted at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH) today.

A report from the KMH indicates that its Mass Casualty Code was triggered after seeing a high number of students admitted to its Accident and Emergency Unit after seemingly consuming said treats.

Twenty-seven children, aged 5 to 15 years, have been examined at the KMH along with four adults who appeared to be intoxicated. At the time of the incident, some of the children were unresponsive and unconscious. Presently, all children and adults are in a stable condition.

The treats were collected for forensic analysis along with urine samples. The KMH, National Drug Abuse Control Council (NDACC), and a team from Central Health Region are conducting the investigation.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness has dispatched public health inspectors and NDACC case officers to the affected primary school to investigate. No other children were found sick at the school. An NDACC outreach case worker has also been dispatched to the KMH to investigate the situation.

The ministry advises parents and guardians to monitor their children for signs and symptoms of:

1. Vomiting
2. Abdominal pain
3. Dehydration

4. Profuse sweating

Based on the signs and symptoms, the presumptive diagnosis is that of marijuana intoxication. If anyone presents these symptoms, they should visit their nearest health facility.

Initial information is that the treats were purchased from two individuals, who are now in police custody along with some recovered items. During their interviews, the suspects claimed that the treats were purchased from another source. The Commissioner of Police has instructed that a thorough investigation be conducted to identify the primary source of the product.

The Office of the Prime Minister will continue to work closely with the KHMH, Belize Police Department and Ministry of Health & Wellness to address this matter. The OPM remains committed to protecting its citizens, especially Belize's children, and will ensure that justice is served.

Prime Minister Briceño reiterates that "All efforts will be taken to ensure that our children are protected and where this matter is concerned, we will ensure that justice is served."

Ends