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SB 24 DEBATE - SECOND READING
(Leach - House Sponsor)

SB 24, A bill to be entitled An Act relating to the inclusion of an understanding of communist regimes and ideologies in the essential knowledge and skills for the social studies curriculum for certain public school students.

REPRESENTATIVE LEACH: Members, polling data has shown that even though a majority of Americans still hold negative views about communism, our younger generations have increasingly been more receptive to collectivist ideologies. This bill in front of you now—**SB 24**—seeks to address this generational disparity by directing the State Board of Education to include developmentally appropriate comprehensive education on the history, tactics, and consequences of communism, and to the TEKS for fourth- to 12th-grade social studies. The intent of this bill is to ensure factual and comprehensive education on communist atrocities paired with a comparison to our great American principles—preventing ideological indoctrination through the use of well-documented historical evidence.

REPRESENTATIVE WU: Just a couple questions. On page 1, Subsection (1), you note to include the history and tactics used by communist movements in the United States. Did I read that correctly?

LEACH: Are you talking about the bill?

WU: Yes, the bill.

LEACH: Where are you looking at?

WU: Page 1, line 15.

LEACH: "The history of and tactics used by communist movements in the United States."

WU: I read that correctly, right?

LEACH: Yes. The language is what the language is.

WU: I'm curious about that because I know you're a very well-educated person. You're aware of the McCarthy movement between 1950 and 1954? Correct?

LEACH: Correct.

WU: During that period there were many, many allegations made against public officials, celebrities, professors—people who, I guess, Senator McCarthy disagreed with. He named them as communists without any proof. You're familiar with that history, correct?

LEACH: Of course, yes.

WU: Many of those people had their entire careers destroyed. There were both criminal and civil consequences for them. Many of them got prosecuted or put on trial for things that they had nothing to do with. People were dragged in front of

the U.S. Senate to answer for things that they had nothing to do with. Is that going to be included—"and tactics used by communist movements in the United States"?

LEACH: Well, I think that—look, I don't want to get into an in-depth discussion about the atrocities of communism. I'm happy to do that. I'm not sure now is the time or this is the bill to do it, but it's clear to me that communist movements in the United States can be traced back all the way to World War I. You have cited some examples during the McCarthyism era where there were accusations made against people who were innocent, but there's also a vast number of—probably countless—examples in our nation's history where the communist movements, both expressly and hidden in all sectors in our society, were prevalent. This bill seeks to prevent that from ever happening again by teaching the appropriate and accurate history to our students in fourth through 12th grade.

WU: I actually am on that point. You've said that history should be comprehensive and it should be accurate. Now, talking about the history of people who were accused of being communists in the United States—people who you've personally said on the front microphone that were found to be innocent—that should be a part of the education if it were to be complete and accurate, should it not?

LEACH: I'm sure it will be.

WU: Okay. And you mentioned earlier that the spread of communism started prior to World War I. You understand that much of the history was because of the labor movement? The accusations were that the people who were demanding fair wages, people who were demanding more reasonable work hours, and people who were demanding that there be workplace safety and to not have people crushed by machines every day—that they were communists because they were asking for rights for workers.

LEACH: Sure. And I would agree with you that an American citizen who simply supported FDR or New Deal initiatives during the '30s and '40s—those people just by way of supporting FDR and supporting New Deal initiatives—aren't in and of themselves communists. However, I would also say that there's no question in history that supports that communist membership increased substantially in those years. That is a part of our nation's history that, in many ways, needs to be taught. Not just the greatest generation and the fight against fascism and communism in World War II, but also just the reality of communism—what it has meant for people all over the world and what it has meant here in our own country. Contrasting that with our great American ideals—there is a stark difference. It is black and white, night and day, when it comes to the ideals underlying communism, the foundations of communism, and the foundation of the great country of America. That's what we want to teach our students in fourth through 12th grade in our public schools.

WU: Absolutely, and just as an intellectual point—and I know you are very well-educated; you have a law degree and many other degrees. Should a well-rounded education not include the complete history of what happened?

Granted, there were probably significant increases in membership or whatever, but the number of people being accused of being communists was nowhere close to the actual membership. Many Americans were attacked, were prosecuted—both civilly and criminally—and accused of being communists when all they were asking for were rights for themselves and rights for their coworkers.

LEACH: At no point have I or will I argue that the American system is perfect and that there are not flaws. We are a government of the people—by the people and for the people. Therefore, the people are going to not be perfect. Certainly we should teach our students accurate history, including the imperfections in American history. But when it comes to communism and the devastation that communism has caused across the world—and that could have been caused here in America had there not been a generation, generations, of great Americans who fought against it—then, I think, we are doing our students a great disservice. When I see the polling of over 80 percent of Americans—over 85 percent of Americans—oppose strongly the tenets of communism, but we are seeing an increasing interest in communism amongst our younger generations, that's of great concern to me. I have a position, as you do, here, to say what we want to be teaching to our kids in the TEKS. And I believe that the true history of communism should be part of that history.

WU: Absolutely. You know, I, personally, would have crafted this bill if this were my bill—I would have crafted it to talk about American democracy and why democracy in a liberal society that grants every person freedoms is more important—that it's a better system instead of just one. Because you would agree with me that there are other systems of government that are also problematic and dangerous, like authoritarianism, theocracies, dictatorships—those are also systems of government that our country has both fought against and is ideologically opposed to. Do you not agree?

LEACH: I don't know if I misheard you, but I just want to make sure I understood. Did you just say that democracy grants our citizens rights?

WU: Yes. A democracy that grants everyone equal rights is superior—

LEACH: The American form of government—our democracy—does not grant me rights, and it does not grant you rights. You have God-given rights, and I do as well. Our system of government is designed and is meant to protect those rights—to safeguard those rights.

WU: Sure. I think we're talking about the same thing.

LEACH: Well, I don't think we're talking about the same thing because communism disagrees with what I just said. It's that you don't have God-given rights. The government gives you rights, the government gives you property, the government gives you everything you have, and you have no fundamental rights that are there to be protected.

WU: Absolutely.

LEACH: God-given rights to be protected by the government. So this is—you are making my point for me. This is why we need an accurate history lesson between the ideals that undergird communism and the ideals that undergird our American system of government.

WU: I don't disagree with you.

LEACH: I think you do.

WU: I don't disagree with you. What I'm asking is, the things that you've talked about—the philosophy of where people get their rights—the same would be true in a dictatorship, the same would be true in an authoritarian regime, the same would be true in a theocracy. Should we not discuss those systems of government since those are antithetical to our American democracy as well?

LEACH: If you want to bring a bill that talks about other systems of government and how they compare to our great American system here of freedom and capitalism and free markets, then I'd be happy to entertain that bill. That is not what this bill intends. That is outside the scope of this bill.

WU: Absolutely. In your bill, does your bill direct schools to talk about the difference between the government and the people that come from those countries?

LEACH: The bill is very, very clear, Representative Wu. If you have a specific question about a section of the bill, I'm happy to go through it with you.

WU: There's nothing in your bill that talks about that, correct?

LEACH: That talks about—say it again.

WU: For example, there is a difference between Cubans who are coming here and fleeing Cuba and the Cuban government as a whole?

LEACH: I would direct you to page 2 of the bill—Subsection (g), lines 7 through 10. The bill makes very clear that the history should be taught about "the oppression and suffering experienced by people living under communist regimes, including mass murder, violent land seizures, show trials, concentration camps, forced labor, poverty, and general economic deterioration." Whether those people came from Cuba, some other country, communist China, or wherever it may be—any people group, any person that has experienced the oppression and the suffering that communism has brought and still brings—then those groups, those people groups, should be talked about.

WU: My question is, should we—should your bill make a special point to point out to students that is it not appropriate to treat individuals from those countries as having the qualities of those countries? Saying that just because you're a refugee from Cuba, it does not make you a communist.

LEACH: That is correct. However, if I say, "I'm a communist," then that does make me a communist. If I say "I believe in the communist principles," then that does make me a communist. And if I respond to a poll—which many younger generations are doing—saying "I'm kind of interested in this communism thing, and I don't really understand how it differs from the American system of

government and the great American miracle that we have here"—that's what we're trying to do to prevent what you're talking about. We are trying to prevent the spread of, and the rooting of, communism in our public schools.

WU: I appreciate that, and I'm not disagreeing with you. What I'm asking is more specific. Would you entertain an amendment that says that specifically? We want to make sure that students, as they're being taught this, are taught the difference between individuals who have not made one choice or another, who may not have made statements, who have not taken any action except to come to our country—except, often, to flee these countries and to flee these oppressive regimes and to come here—to say we should not treat people as the whole that they are, one way or the other, unless they have done something themselves. If they themselves have said, "I am this" or "I am that," that's one thing, but we should not presuppose that for people just because of where they come from.

LEACH: I believe that's included in the context of this bill already, Representative Wu.

REPRESENTATIVE KITZMAN: Representative Leach, are you aware that communism is responsible for more misery and murder around the planet in the 20th century than any other form of government?

LEACH: Representative Kitzman, I think I heard you correctly. I'm not sure the body did, but I want to give you the opportunity to repeat what you just said.

KITZMAN: Are you aware that communism is responsible for more murder and misery around this planet in the 20th century than any other form of government?

LEACH: I am, yes, sir. Well said.

KITZMAN: Are you aware that in China, estimates of up to 70 million Chinese were killed by their communist government in the 20th century?

LEACH: It's horrifying. Yes.

KITZMAN: Are you aware that in the Soviet Union, Stalin is responsible for killing over 40 million of his fellow Russians?

LEACH: I am, yes, sir.

KITZMAN: Are you aware that one of the reasons we have a problem in Ukraine and Russia today is because there's still people alive in Ukraine that remember when Stalin starved those people to death by the millions in the name of communist revolution?

LEACH: Preach it.

KITZMAN: Would it not be important that our children find out that it's not just another equal form of government but is one of the most heinous things mankind has ever done to itself in the history of this planet?

LEACH: Well said, Representative Kitzman. Stan the man—well said. That's why I hope to see no red on the board and the entire board lit up green to support this bill.

[Amendment No. 1 by Goodwin was laid before the house.]

REPRESENTATIVE GOODWIN: The cruelty of regimes, massacres, and genocides are atrocious, and our students ought to know that we must strive to never repeat them. However, the political ideological spectrum spans from communism to fascism. If we ask our students to understand the ideological and political motivations behind the genocides carried out by communists, we must also ensure they understand the atrocities committed by fascist regimes—those that operated under the banners of extreme nationalism, racial supremacy, and totalitarian control. Ignoring one side of the spectrum while scrutinizing the other creates an incomplete and potentially misleading historical education. Our responsibility is to equip students with the full truth so they may recognize the dangers of all forms of authoritarianism, no matter where they fall on the ideological spectrum, and uphold the values of human dignity, democracy, and freedom for future generations.

LEACH: I'm going to move to table. The reason is because I want to send this bill to the governor's desk as quickly as possible. If you want to bring a bill opposing fascism and teaching our kids about the history and horrors of fascism, I would gladly sign onto that. But I don't want this bill to become a Christmas tree; this bill is about communism. So I'm asking you to stick with me and table this amendment.

[Representative Leach moved to table Amendment No. 1.]

GOODWIN: It's truly important to show all sides of an issue and to make sure our students understand not just communism but fascism as well, to understand what has been done to other countries. And also to talk to them about the genocide of Jewish, Romani, and even LGBTQ+ people—of political opponents, people with disabilities, and all of the minority and ethnic groups that have faced atrocities. We should make sure our students understand all of these things.

REPRESENTATIVE RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: You're talking about fascism and the millions of Jews and Polish—about 11 million people—who died. You're referencing World War II and fascism. Did it impact Americans as well?

GOODWIN: Yes.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Are you aware that there are different key steps, or indicators, that are very relevant to these times to talk about fascism? One of the steps, or one of the factors, of fascism is exploiting national crises and discontent. Were you aware that is part of fascist movements?

GOODWIN: Absolutely. I think what is most important about teaching history is that then we can recognize when those things are happening in the current day.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Yes. Is it your understanding that it is important to educate children about fascism because one of the other indicators is cultivating an "us versus them" mentality? Were you aware that is also part of the fascist movement?

GOODWIN: Absolutely. People were divided—just like sometimes we see here in the United States, where we make others seem different and fearful. Students, when they learn about the history, are more likely to recognize indicators here at home.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Very good. Are you aware that another of the indicators is something that is important to us as a democracy—discrediting democratic institutions, criticizing the democratic process, and calling them inefficient or corrupt? Are you aware that is also one of the other indicators?

GOODWIN: Yes, absolutely. Today we have a lot of criticism of our higher education, and it's really unfortunate. It is repeating a pattern.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Yes. Were you aware—or do you agree—that one of the other indicators is suppressing dissent and freedom of speech? Is that something important for our children to understand as an indicator of fascism?

GOODWIN: Absolutely. Sowing distrust among the media was something that happened in fascist regimes. And sometimes we see that here.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Were you aware that part of the way to build a fascist government and fascist regimes is establishing strong, centralized control and consolidating the power of the government in the hands of a few people? Do you agree that is another important indicator for our children to know about fascism?

GOODWIN: Yes. Absolutely.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Were you aware that fascists use propaganda and manipulation to control those governments, and that's also something that was an indicator that happened during the Nazi regime?

GOODWIN: Yes.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: And, lastly, were you aware that fascist governments use violence and repression—something that is really close to home here in America?

GOODWIN: Yes. You make so many good points, and these are really critical things for our students to understand.

RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS: Thank you. I think it's a great amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE BRYANT: Ms. Goodwin, communism made its debut in 1917 Russia. Is that correct?

GOODWIN: I believe so.

BRYANT: We saw the devastation that ultimately was caused by that for about the next 75 years. Isn't that correct?

GOODWIN: Yes.

BRYANT: But Russia today—the very same country that was once communist—is now fascist. Is it not?

GOODWIN: Yes.

BRYANT: And Putin is a fascist. Correct?

GOODWIN: Yes.

BRYANT: In the same country where communism ended.

GOODWIN: Right.

BRYANT: So the complete picture is communism and fascism.

GOODWIN: That's right.

BRYANT: Every other type of authoritarian regime that may pop up in between. Isn't that correct?

GOODWIN: That's correct, and that is why I believe the bill, as it stands, really is incomplete. It's giving our students an incomplete picture, and that's why I filed this amendment.

[The motion to table prevailed by Record No. 3179.]

[Amendment No. 2 by Hinojosa was laid before the house.]

REPRESENTATIVE HINOJOSA: This is similar to Representative Goodwin's amendment, but this is more narrow and only includes fascism. It is my understanding that last time we sent this bill out of this committee, we did include fascism for a balanced approach to teaching our students. So this is very narrow. It just adds fascism to this bill so that it is also put into our TEKS. Fascism is far-right authoritarianism characterized by the suppression of dissent. Surely we should all be able to support an America—and the teaching of our kids—where dissent is something that is part of who we are, part of the values that we cherish, and part of who we are as Americans. Fascism is characterized by a strong, centralized government with limited individual freedoms and limited political opposition. That is not who we are as Americans, and we should teach our kids the same.

[Representative Leach moved to table Amendment No. 2.]

HINOJOSA: Again, we're talking about the education of our children. That should be a balanced approach free from partisanship but the telling of the truth. We know the horrors that fascism has caused around the world. We know that is not who we are as Americans, and that is part of how we should bring up and teach our children in our public schools.

[The motion to table prevailed by Record No. 3180.]

[Amendment No. 3 by Wu was laid before the house.]

WU: Members, this is not an amendment to strip the bill. This is, I think, a very reasonable amendment based on what I talked about earlier. My family had its lands confiscated. We lost our farm, and we lost our home. That was what was done to my grandparents and great-grandparents. My parents' generation was thrown into the fields during the Cultural Revolution, during the Great Leap Forward. My dad was thrown into fields when he was 13 or 14 years old—by himself—and basically told to either farm or die. He managed to survive, but about 55 million other people did not. For me, when I hear people call me a communist spy, or when members of this body do say those things, I get a little

offended because our family has been the victims of communism for a very long time. We fled to this country as fast as we possibly could. For us, when we come here to again be accused of the same things and to not recognize that many of us fought against these things back in the homeland is insulting. For all my friends who were in Tiananmen Square, to those who made it out, for those who did not make it out—this is for them. This is for all the Cubans who struggled to be free and who risked life and limb to go across that 70-mile stretch of ocean. People who fought with everything they had. People who went to prison for decades and decades, many of whom never saw the light of day again because they opposed these governments. To not give them any credit, to not give them any respect for doing something that is far harder than opposing communism in a democracy, they opposed communism in a communist country.

This amendment is to recognize the things they have done, to recognize that all people are not the same, and to recognize that people all around the world seek liberty and justice. I just ask for this amendment to respect what they have done, respect the sacrifices that they have made, and respect the history that is there. These countries did not move along without a peep. The people made noise, the people fought, and the people suffered. We should recognize that, and we should respect that.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSENTHAL: Tell me, do you feel the need to bring this amendment because of the concern that enacting legislation like this will foster negativity, even racism, especially towards our kids in schools and people on the street?

WU: Absolutely. The whole point of why I'm concerned about this bill is the same point that I've made before. We're now teaching our children to view other people based on stereotypes and based on a broad general understanding of what their country was. To say, "If all of these people are from this country, then they all must share the same traits"—for Chinese people who fled the communist country there, for Cubans who fled that country, and for people who have fled other places, that is simply not true. They do not support those governments. They never supported the governments. They opposed those governments to the point that they fled. They had to flee their own homes and come here.

ROSENTHAL: Right.

WU: The point is that I am afraid that as we go forward in this, we will lose the distinction that there are people from those countries who fought valiantly, many of whom were slaughtered in the millions. We should recognize that. There were lots and lots of people who opposed them and fought bravely. It is unfair to label an entire population as one way when they were clearly not. There were clearly lots and lots of people who fought against it and opposed it.

ROSENTHAL: One concern is for the folks who were fleeing those oppressive regimes and standing up for, actually, the American values that are our values. The other part is the danger of being stereotyped and caricatured to the point

where you're dehumanized. I don't know if you would agree with me, but you might say the Jewish people have a little bit of experience with being stereotyped and caricatured to the point where it's dangerous to our communities.

WU: I started the questioning of Mr. Leach with McCarthyism because that is always our fear—that we would go into this political frenzy where we look for people, we label the people we don't like as one thing, and we don't give them an opportunity to defend themselves. We make those accusations without evidence, and we just say it is what it is, and we start this again. During the 1950s, during the height of McCarthyism, lots of Jewish people were simply rounded up and labeled as communists because they were Jewish, because they opposed the people who were doing this, because they were liberal, and because they were whatever they were. It's an easy target against people who are in the minority.

ROSENTHAL: Exactly. Actually, this debate reminds me of the McCarthy era. Can you tell me what the phrase was that started the end of the McCarthy era?

WU: If it was another time, I could answer you, but it's been a long day.

ROSENTHAL: The phrase was, "Have you no decency?" And so the question is when will we find our decency.

WU: Absolutely. Members, again, this amendment is not designed to stunt the bill; it's not designed to mess with it. It simply says that as we're teaching all this, could we take a breath and just explain to our children that yes, there were lots of brave people who opposed these regimes and fought against them, and many of them are here today in our country. But many of those same people never left and will never leave. Many of those people were tortured and murdered along the way.

ROSENTHAL: Thank you, sir. And that literally includes your family, right?

WU: Including my family.

ROSENTHAL: Very good. Thank you for bringing the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE VO: Representative Wu, you know that I came from South Vietnam, right?

WU: Yes.

VO: And at one time, South Vietnam was taken over by the North Vietnamese communists?

WU: Correct. The South Vietnamese fought bravely against the communists, and they should be recognized for that. They should be remembered for that.

VO: Right, and the South Vietnamese never believed in communism or the communist party or anything like that?

WU: Correct.

VO: If this amendment would go onto the bill, then—

WU: If this amendment goes on the bill, we will make sure that the South Vietnamese who fought alongside American troops and died alongside American troops are remembered for their actions, are remembered for their opposition, and that they disagreed and did not approve of the communists who were coming and invading the south and fought almost to the last man.

VO: All right. Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE OLCOTT: Representative Wu, is there anything in Representative Leach's bill that actually states that all Chinese are communists or that all Vietnamese are communists?

WU: No, Mr. Olcott, and that is the fear, because this bill does not say those things. Because this bill does not make those distinctions, I am fearful that they will not teach those distinctions, right? The schools operate on the black letter of the law. They look at this bill, and they say, "What is the bare minimum we are required to teach?" They will teach those things. What I want the bare minimum to include is at least one tiny part of this curriculum—one miniscule part of this study—should include the people who fought against it. It should include the people who gave their lives fighting against this.

OLCOTT: But don't you think, Representative Wu, that if this was taught in schools, then the students would be more likely to understand that there were Chinese, like yourself, that fled communism and there were Vietnamese, like Representative Vo, that fled communism—if this was taught in school? Which is why—one reason I support the bill. That's why I'm surprised that you weren't one of the first ones to actually sign onto this bill. It seems like it would be a step in the right direction to educate our students about the dangers of communism and why people like yourself had to flee communism. It seems to me it would go a long way in actually accomplishing what you seem to want to accomplish.

WU: Again, this is why I have this amendment. Because I feel this bill is incomplete. I feel this bill does not talk about the complete picture. I feel this bill talks about the countries but does not talk about the people. The people are very different from the nation. Just like we say, "President Trump is the president right now, but not everyone has to agree with him. Not everyone has to support him." When Joe Biden was president, we could say, "He is the president, but not everyone has to agree with him or like him." Many people can say, "I actively opposed him." That's perfectly fine. We should have a complete discussion, not just say, "Because Joe Biden was your president at that time, therefore you agreed to all of his policies. You agree with everything that he did." We're saying that's fundamentally false because there's many people who gave their lives fighting against what is talked about in this bill and fighting against those same governments. Nothing in the bill asks teachers to talk about them—to talk about the fact that there are tons and tons of Chinese people who opposed the Chinese communist government. There were tons and tons of people who opposed the North Vietnamese government and tons of Koreans who oppose the North Korean government for the exact same reasons. Nothing in this bill says that; it says we teach the complete picture.

What I am most concerned about, and what this amendment addresses is, one: I am afraid that those distinctions—those stories—will be lost. Those acts of heroism, those acts of bravery, will be forgotten. But just as importantly: I'm afraid that this will lead students down a path where they say, "Well, we just assume that everybody from Cuba is a communist. Right?" That's not a fair statement. It's not a fair statement that everyone in Cuba supports Castro. That's not a fair statement. This amendment specifically says, "how ideologies differ across the country's population," "how a person residing in a country governed by a communist regime may not agree with the ideology of that government," and talks about how individual people, everyday people, rose up and fought against this. I don't understand why that's so bad. In fact, if we're saying that these countries are bad and that we should fight against them, then we should be praising the people who fought against them. We should be praising the people who were in Tiananmen Square.

LEACH: Members, in short, to respond to my colleague Representative Wu—all of this is included in the bill. I honestly don't think Representative Wu has read the bill closely. The SBOE is given time. This does not go into effect until the '26-'27 school year. They have time to develop this curriculum. It's not us developing the curriculum; it's the SBOE doing it. If you look at it, it requires a comparative analysis of collectivist ideologies contrasted with United States' founding principles. And then it gives specific attention to input—this is in the bill—seeking input from victims of communism and from nationally recognized organizations dedicated to commemorating victims of communism. It says the SBOE should incorporate material from existing education programs that provide instruction on the topic of communist regimes and ideologies.

I don't disagree with the spirit and the intent of Representative Wu's amendment. I simply do not think it's necessary, and, members, I would ask you to stick with me on a motion to table.

REPRESENTATIVE BUTTON: Chairman Leach, you and I had some serious conversations because you are my neighboring representative. Do you know that my parents escaped communists to Taiwan during the hardship, and then I was born and raised in Taiwan?

LEACH: I do. Now you're a member of the Texas House of Representatives, and a damn good one.

BUTTON: Yes, and I'm proud I was born and raised in Taiwan and came to this great country, but I overly remind everyone the danger of communism. Isn't that true?

LEACH: Yes, you do.

BUTTON: Every time I get a chance to talk to people—freedom is not free, just like our beloved President Reagan said. Freedom is not free. That's why people need to understand what is going on in the real world. Isn't that true?

LEACH: Well said, yes.

BUTTON: I'm reading this in your bill exactly. You pointed out that you seek input from the victims of communism and then nationally recognized organizations dedicated to—you know, it's right there. Do you know that I was deeply moved? My tea almost dropped out when Chairman Wu and Chairman Vo—they talked about their experience.

LEACH: Yes, I do.

BUTTON: I was deeply, deeply moved. I want each of our members to realize how painful it is when they say those things that they personally share with you. Chairman, you know, my heart is really broken because it is so important. We need to let people understand, especially the school-age students. They might be kind of naive, and they don't understand the whole situation. We need to educate them when they are still at an early stage. Is that true?

LEACH: That is correct. And Madam Chair, you've been around here long enough to know that on a bill like this—which is solely focused on educating our fourth- through 12th-grade students on the horrors of communism. You've been around here long enough to know if I, as the author of the bill, stand here and start to accept, allow, or support a bunch of amendments, then a bill like this becomes a Christmas tree. In order to prevent that—it's not that I don't agree with some of these amendments or that I don't support the spirit and intent of some of the amendments, but Madam Chair, you know well enough that in order to protect my bill and get it to the governor's desk as fast as possible that I simply have to move to table these amendments even though I disagree with them. On this specific amendment, I believe that it's already in the bill and not necessary.

BUTTON: I respect your decision. I'll be supporting your proposal to table this, knowing that your intent is to keep this clean so we can move it and let people know how terrible communism is. We need to let the kids understand that. Thank you for bringing up this very important bill. Also, I know we're supposed to stick with the amendment, but I do agree with you that you don't want to turn this into a Christmas tree. Thank you very much.

[Representative Leach moved to table Amendment No. 3.]

REPRESENTATIVE FLORES: Chairman Wu, I recognize what you're saying with your amendment because, as you know, there is the fear that perhaps it might make people out to be something that they're not. In our very state of Texas, the Tejanos—the Mexicans who were here in Texas when it was Mexico and were fighting for independence against the Mexican government—you know, they themselves—Mexicans and Tejanos—were discriminated against and were scapegoated after the revolution. It took a really long time to make sure that people were not treating Mexicans or Tejanos as second-class citizens or as bad people. So I see what you're saying with your amendment. I mean, I don't know if you realize that about our own history. That's proof that it does happen.

WU: Absolutely. Thank you so much. Going on the same thing—I just want to say, I absolutely have read the bill. This provision is not in the bill.

The provision in the bill says you have to go talk to those people. It doesn't say you have to teach about them. This amendment specifically says "teach the idea that there were people there who opposed those ideologies." That's it. It is a point-blank rule. It says, "make sure your curriculum, including teaching, says not everyone in that country agreed." That's it. I think that's a very important point. It is a very important distinction from what is in the bill. The bill just says, "Well, there were victims." But then what? What did those victims do? What happened to them? What I want us to be able to say and tell our kids is that there were lots of people in those countries who disagreed, who opposed these governments, said no, and fought back. Their stories deserve to be told. They deserve to be more than just a subsection or a little bullet point. This is not an unreasonable amendment. This amendment doesn't mess up the bill. The most it would do is ask the senate to concur with the house amendments. That's it, right? I think this is something simple that the senate could just say, "Yes, that's perfectly reasonable. That's perfectly acceptable." We should teach that there were heroes in those countries too. There were champions in those countries who fought against this. So I would ask you to vote no on the motion to table.

[The motion to table prevailed by Record No. 3181.]

[Amendment No. 4 by Rosenthal was laid before the house.]

ROSENTHAL: This is an amendment to add mention of national socialism in Nazi Germany and its resurgence in the United States and Europe in the present day. I want to be clear about this. I am not standing at this microphone to burn a bunch of time. I really want to express my grave concerns with the type of messaging that we're forwarding with legislation like this and the move towards authoritarian regimes like people suffered under in Nazi Germany and communities that have survived attempts at eradication throughout history. So when we're looking at this legislation—at this bill—we are seeing the signs of rising authoritarianism, like the politicization of independent institutions, the spreading of disinformation, and executive power grabs. Does any of this sound familiar to any of you all? Because from my perspective and from the cultural teachings that I grew up with, what we're looking at today mirrors some deeply, deeply disturbing and dangerous periods of history that a lot of us should have learned about in school and some of us are old enough to remember. Indicators include delegitimizing communities. Isn't that what we're doing right now with this bill? Undermining democratic norms, the rise of extremist groups, and the denial of election results—none of this sounds familiar at all to any of you?

REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Your amendment simply adds direction to teach about Nazism and the current, unfortunate resurgence of that violent and hateful ideology in the United States and in Europe. Is that correct?

ROSENTHAL: That's correct. Because if we're going to teach about the dangers of communism, and let me just be clear: Israeli culture fosters one of the purest communist forms of self-governance on the planet. So those of you in this room who claim to support Israel, have you ever heard of a kibbutz? The kibbutzim in

Israel are pure communist, pacifist communities. So if we're going to talk about the evils of communism, I think we really should be talking about totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and control over the many by the few. That's my deep concern.

TURNER: Representative Rosenthal, regardless of how members may feel about this specific bill, I think we all agree—in my opinion, you may disagree—that the evils of communism are important to be taught as part of a holistic education. But just as bad—and worse, actually—are the evils of Nazism and fascism. We know right now, in Europe specifically—we are seeing in several European countries a real resurgence of that ideology coming to fruition in elections there in Europe. Is that not true?

ROSENTHAL: It's absolutely correct. I would add that we are seeing a rise in neo-Nazism in the United States as well.

TURNER: We are, and we've seen too many examples over the last few years of how that rise in Nazism has led to violence in our country. I agree, I think, with you that young people should be taught the evils, the dangers, and the historic carnage that Nazism has wrought on the world over the last 100 years. It's important that those lessons not be lost to history. They must be learned and carried forward in our youngest generation. I think you have a good amendment.

ROSENTHAL: You're right. In Jewish Israeli culture we say "never again" to remember. Le'olam lo: Never again, and always remember. I think what is important here is to connect the totalitarianism and the authoritarianism with the part of governance that is evil and monstrously dangerous.

REPRESENTATIVE RAYMOND: Let me ask you this. I support this bill, and I support your amendment. I'll vote for your amendment. If your amendment were to be adopted, would that get you to the point where you would vote for the bill?

ROSENTHAL: If this amendment is adopted, I'll vote for the bill.

RAYMOND: And if it's not?

ROSENTHAL: If it's not, I'll oppose the bill.

RAYMOND: Because you mentioned a minute ago that you feel like this bill delegitimizes some people.

ROSENTHAL: I don't think that's what I said.

RAYMOND: Would you mind telling me why you feel it's a bad bill? I'm trying to get a sense of where you're coming from.

ROSENTHAL: Okay. Very good. The danger of the bill, in my view—what I was saying was, when we talk about communism in the absence of connecting it to the totalitarianism and authoritarian regimes that have truly been dangerous, then we risk stigmatizing communities that come from these countries without—

RAYMOND: You've read the bill?

ROSENTHAL: Let me finish.

RAYMOND: You've read the bill?

ROSENTHAL: Can I please—

RAYMOND: Did you read the bill?

ROSENTHAL: Yes, sir. If we are not recognizing that the part of communism that is truly evil is the fascist—

RAYMOND: Well, I think if you read the bill, Representative—if you read the bill, it makes it pretty clear that what we would be directing SBOE to do is to develop a curriculum that does inform our students how horrible communism is and what it's all about—what happened in countries, and is happening in countries, like China, like Russia, and like North Korea. So when you say you see a danger that if this bill passes and we start teaching kids about how horrible communism is—you heard Chairman Wu talk about his parents and how they were treated by communism. You heard Representative Vo, who got on a boat and barely made it over here because of communism. And you think if this bill passes and we teach that to our kids, then they're not going to understand why, and, somehow, it's going to delegitimize some people in this country? I don't understand where you're coming from. Let me ask you this: Do you believe that there are efforts to spread communism in America today?

ROSENTHAL: If it's okay with you, may I—

RAYMOND: Would you answer this part first? I think it's important. Do you think that there are efforts to promote communism in the United States of America today?

ROSENTHAL: Let me speak to the first part of what you said first, if that's okay. Then I'll come—

RAYMOND: No. You asked if it's okay.

ROSENTHAL: So first—

RAYMOND: I'm saying, no, it's not okay.

ROSENTHAL: Mr. Raymond—

RAYMOND: I want you to answer the last part of my question. You'll start with that.

ROSENTHAL: Mr. Raymond, if I can respond, please.

RAYMOND: You can respond.

ROSENTHAL: I want to thank you very much for asking the question, because I believe the way that you're asking and the way that you've phrased this absolutely illustrates the need to broaden the perspective of this bill and not just talk about communism and the isolation of that word but to connect it to totalitarian regimes. Because communism—that word in its purest, in its own form, is pacifist. So what you are doing with what you are saying right now stokes hate.

RAYMOND: What I'm saying is, if you read the bill, the bill will tell you how they will talk about the history of communism—where it's been terrible, where it's killed millions and millions and millions and millions and millions of people.

That's what the bill says. It doesn't say anything else. You're making it—with all respect, you're making it seem that if this bill passed and we started teaching our kids a little more—because they learn some already, I suppose—but they're going to learn a little bit more about how bad communism has been for this world, then that somehow that in itself would be bad to teach them. I don't understand where you're coming from, brother. I really don't. It makes it sound as if you are sort of a—I don't even want to say what it makes you sound like. It won't come out well.

ROSENTHAL: First, if that's a question—I'm not sure that it is. What I will say is if you fail to take a holistic approach to understand what the actual dangers are and where they come from, then you fail to serve the people.

[Representative Leach moved to table Amendment No. 4.]

[The motion to table prevailed by Record No. 3182.]

RAYMOND: I know you guys don't want to hear speeches. I'm not really talking to the republicans right now; I'm talking to the democrats. I have to speak on this because let me tell you something: Democrats, read the bill. Jon, read the bill. "The oppression and suffering experienced by people living under communist regimes including mass murder, violent land seizures, show trials, concentration camps, forced labor, poverty, and general economic deterioration," and it goes on. And democrats, let me tell you something: You vote no on a bill like this, and it defines you in a way that we're not. So democrats, I'm asking you, stop and think. There is nothing good about communism—nothing. Please guys, look at this. Let me tell you something—I'm not going to yield to you or anybody else, so don't ask me again.

I remember when my daughter was in the fifth grade. She came home one day, and she said, "Dad"—it was 9/11—she said, "Dad, they didn't say anything about 9/11 at school today. That's not right, Dad." I passed a bill so that they would say something about 9/11 every year from then on, and that's what we have in schools today. I passed a bill to make sure we talk in schools about holocausts so that people and our students would know that happened. If you want a bill about fascism—I voted for those amendments. I voted for your amendment. They didn't pass, but that doesn't take away from the fact that we have this in front of us. If we, as democrats, continue to take the bait and vote against bills like this, get ready for more, because there's not going to be more of us two years from now—there's going to be fewer. That's just the way it's going to go. Because you know communism is wrong. If you think it's right, go live in China for a little while. Go live in Cuba for a while; go live in North Korea for a little while. See how that goes for you. You know, we're all grown up. Do what you want to do. But I ask you—I know you're not communist, I know you don't believe in communism. Don't let them paint you that way. That's all I say. Please vote for the bill.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

ROSENTHAL: Is it not customary to actually have open debate on these microphones?

CHAIR (Harris in the chair): That's not a proper parliamentary inquiry.

ROSENTHAL: Second question. Is it not normal decorum for us to address each other by last name and title?

CHAIR: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE DUTTON: I think in my 20 terms in this legislature, I have never been more mixed, or had mixed feelings, about a bill. And let me tell you why I have mixed feelings about it. Because on the one hand, I know and feel that this is the greatest country ever. I know it is because of what it has done not only for me, but a whole bunch of people like me. That's on the one side. On the other side, when you start talking about teaching about the communist regimes and the things that they do, I agree with it. I agree that we should talk about that, but what I also know is this: Almost every one of the civil rights leaders in this country were first labeled communists. That's what they did to them. I think, if we're going to teach about communism, we ought to make sure that they don't teach anything like—our preamble says to form a perfect union. And what these people were trying to do was form a more perfect union, and I don't think they should have been labeled communists. I'll just give you one example.

Most of you know who Jackie Robinson was, right? You know Jackie Robinson, and you thought he was the first Black baseball player. Well, you know how he got there? You probably don't know Paul Robeson. Paul Robeson was Black. He was a lawyer, he was an actor, he was an activist, and he could do just about anything. He starred in *Othello* and that caused a problem for the larger community, so they labeled him a communist. But what Paul Robeson had done when he was a lawyer was he wrote a letter to the baseball league telling them that if they don't get a Black baseball player, he was going to sue them. As a consequence, the league got Jackie Robinson. And that's so you know what happened. But even beyond that, what also happened was this: Paul Robeson made a statement during World War II that a Black man wouldn't fight in a white man's war, and the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee had a hearing on it. And you know who the star witness was against what Paul Robeson said? Jackie Robinson. So if you're going to teach communism, I hope it's not reflective of the civil rights movement in this country because I don't think any of you—Dr. King was labeled a communist, W.E.B. Du Bois—all of them were labeled communists. What they really wanted was to showcase the treatment of Black people in this country and to stop it. Because they, too, thought this was the best country in the world, but it needed improvement. That's where I stand today. That this is the best country in the world, but it still can be improved. If somebody labels me a communist, so be it. But I am going to fight to make sure, for example, that every child—Dr. Buckley—can read by third grade because I think that's important.

So when I say I'm—I'm almost bipolar on this bill because I want to vote for it on one hand, but on the other hand I want to make sure that when we teach about communism, we're not teaching that the people who wanted to make this a more perfect union were simply communists, because they were not. So I'm going to go to my desk, and between here and there I'll figure it out. I know what Chairman Leach is trying to do, and I think it's important. But I also think it's important to make sure that history gets it right. Most of us recognize that history

is always written by the winners, not by the people who were the losers in the whole battle. Many of us were the losers. Many of us up here are the products of the people who were losers, so we didn't get to write the history. We got to live it, though. So today on this bill, I just hope that the TEKS talks about these folks who were the civil rights leaders who said that we simply want America to live up to its true meaning of its creed—that all men are created equal.

ROSENTHAL: I was not actually going to speak at the end of this, but the debate has inspired me to oppose the bill.

I'm going to be super brief, and all I'm going to say is for those of you that don't remember or haven't learned about McCarthyism, please look it up. Please study that. This echoes of that era. If we label one regime with a word—if we just say "communism is evil" and we fail to connect that with the other types of totalitarian, authoritarian, and oppressive regimes that must be opposed and defeated across this planet as they rise right now—if we fail to connect those things, if we fail to oppose them holistically with intelligence and understanding, then we are failing our society. That's why I'll be opposing this bill. It rings of McCarthyism.

REPRESENTATIVE DEAYALA: I do promise to be brief. Earlier this session I told a little bit about our family history. My parents and my older brothers fled Castro's Cuba to come here, and I had, whether you call it a benefit or not a benefit, of listening to the stories and of hearing what was happening growing up in the comfort of west Houston. I wouldn't be here in this body if I didn't grow up with that kind of history in our family and to see the contrast between that form of government and ours.

Back to the bill. The bill talks about an education so that our students understand the difference in ideology—and not just the ideology, but how it manifests itself in reality. That is so important because the ideology, in theory or in the abstract, can be somewhat alluring. But only when you see it manifest itself in real time, in real communities, and in real people do you understand how horrible that form of government is. To teach it the way this bill suggests it should be—struck for those to put the curriculum—I think, for those in our schools, would be the best way for them to understand in reality what this form of government is and how it manifests itself in the world. I support the bill strongly. I hope you all do too.

LEACH: I am proud to bring this bill to you. Chairman Dutton and all of you members, I invite you to vote for this bill. Chairman Dutton, everything you just said I agree with 100 percent. As you say, if the SBOE, in drafting this curriculum, does not respect us, then they should expect us. I think we've made clear what this legislature intends with this bill, and that is to promote American ideals and to continue to fight against the horrific atrocities of communism. If you agree with that, vote yes on this bill.

[**SB 24** was passed to third reading by Record No. 3183.]

CSSB 3 DEBATE - SECOND READING
(King - House Sponsor)

CSSB 3, A bill to be entitled An Act relating to the regulation of products derived from hemp, including consumable hemp products and hemp beverages and the hemp-derived cannabinoids contained in those products; requiring occupational licenses and permits; imposing fees; creating criminal offenses; authorizing civil penalties; imposing taxes.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Thank you for the opportunity to lay out **CSSB 3**. **CSSB 3** is an important bill for the State of Texas. Over the past few months, I've met with stakeholders from across the industry and heard testimony from hundreds of witnesses. Those culminated in the bill we have before us. It ensures that hemp is properly regulated and safe for adult Texans to consume. On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed the Farm Bill into law, legalizing the cultivation and production of hemp. It is important to note that hemp is defined as a cannabinoid plant containing less than 0.3 percent delta-9 THC.

In the years since implementation of the Farm Bill, gray areas exist regarding the legality of consumable hemp products. The lack of regulation included no age requirement, created an opportunity for synthetic products to enter the market, and allowed products with higher percentages of THC to go unnoticed in the marketplace. This created a public health hazard that must be addressed. I believe **CSSB 3** will create the regulatory framework needed. **CSSB 3** allows Texas-grown, American-made products under 0.3 percent to be sold safely to adults 21 and older. These products will be required to be tested by DEA-approved labs and will be sold through the three-tiered system similar to alcohol. This bill prohibits vape pens but will allow the sale of tinctures, hemp flower, hemp beverages, and other consumables. Importantly, **CSSB 3** will prohibit these products from being marketed in likenesses to children's snacks such as Cheerios, Nerds Ropes, et cetera, and will prohibit these products from being sold in stores that are not limited to 21-and-older customers. This will help get rid of the 24-hour vape stores that have popped up all over and particularly next to schools.

Some of you may have heard from constituents regarding THC-induced psychosis. **CSSB 3** will address this concern by banning all synthetic or converted cannabinoids as well as higher doses of THC. Science has proved that these manipulated versions of THC, such as delta-8, are responsible for these episodes of psychosis, and they do not belong in Texas. Another concern that's been noted is local control. What if your county doesn't support the sale of THC hemp-based products? **CSSB 3** allows for a county to vote to be dry in the same manner they can vote on alcohol.

Under **CSSB 3**, TABC will be the agency tasked with regulating this industry. Permits will be required for manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. While hemp beverages will be sold in the current three-tiered system, other hemp products would be able to be vertically integrated, allowing a manufacturer to also distribute their product. Because of the importance of keeping the products out of children's hands, **CSSB 3** requires an electronic verification of consumers' IDs, ensuring that the purchaser is at least 21. It also prohibits the

sale within 300 feet of a school, church, public playground, day-care center, childcare center, homeless shelter, or substance abuse treatment center. Additionally, these THC products will have an additional tax of $0.02 per 2.5 milligrams of delta-9. Half will go to TABC to regulate the industry, a quarter will go to accredited crime labs for product testing, and a quarter will go to support opioid and narcotic response services by law enforcement. Ultimately, members, these products are federally legal and could be mailed directly to the consumer. Even if Texas passes a total ban, a complete ban would maintain the status quo, just putting more of it on the streets, unregulated. **CSSB 3** now would create a rigid, regulatory framework to protect all Texans.

[Representative Reynolds raised a point of order against further consideration of **CSSB 3** under Rule 4, Section 32(c)(3), of the House Rules on the grounds that the rulemaking authority statement in the bill analysis is incorrect. The point of order was withdrawn.]

[Amendment No. 1 by King was laid before the house.]

KING: This amendment makes several changes to strengthen this bill. It excludes topical products containing hemp from the definition of consumable hemp. These products do not have an intoxicating effect and are used to provide pain relief similar to Icy Hot. It makes several changes to clarify operational language for TABC. This amendment creates equitable milligram caps between multi-serving hemp spirits and single-serving hemp spirits. It specifies that hemp beverages containing less than 0.5 percent alcohol are not considered an alcoholic beverage, aligning with existing alcohol regulations. This is necessary since certain flavorings contain trace amounts of alcohol. If there is a product that contains alcohol for a reason other than flavoring, TABC would review appropriately and has the final decision on approving all hemp products. The amendment would give rulemaking authority to TABC to determine appropriate ownership interests in hemp testing labs. Finally, it would clarify that the milligram cap is specific to delta-9 THC and not all cannabinoids combined, allowing for full spectrum THC.

[Amendment No. 1 was adopted by Record No. 3188.]

[Amendment No. 2 by Oliverson, et al., was laid before the house.]

REPRESENTATIVE OLIVERSON: Members, I am proud to be laying out a floor substitute to **SB 3**, which restores the original intent of our state's hemp laws and closes a dangerous loophole that has been exploited at the expense of public health and safety. Let's be clear—no social good comes from the legalization of intoxicants. What began in 2019 as a bipartisan effort to support Texas agriculture has since been hijacked by a cottage industry of unregulated THC sellers. **HB 1325** was never intended to legalize intoxicating THC products. It was intended to support farmers and to promote an industrial hemp market that was designed to encourage the development of nonconsumable hemp products like fiber, rope, and textiles. Instead, we now have the largest pseudolegal THC market in the country, not through legislation, but through regulatory drift. Delta-8, delta-10, and other chemically altered THC compounds are being sold in gas stations, vape shops, corner stores—some with concentrations exceeding

90 percent, wrapped in candy-colored packaging, and marketed directly to children. As a physician, I cannot in good conscience support a system where Texans self-medicate with unregulated, inconsistent, and highly potent intoxicants. These substances are not medicine. They are psychosis-inducing, overdose-prone chemicals masquerading as relief.

These products being sold are not tested, are not dosed consistently, and are not supervised by a medical professional. Even major beverage manufacturers have abandoned efforts to mass-produce hemp drinks, recognizing that safe and uniform THC dosing in commercial products is nearly impossible. This substitute bans the sale of all consumable hemp products that contain THC. It draws a bright and forcible line with no wiggle room. It bans that sale of synthetic and semi-synthetic THC products, regardless of whether they come from hemp or marijuana. No more delta-8, no more delta-10, or chemically altered THC extracts. No more legal gray zones. We are not banning hemp. We are banning high.

This amendment will preserve the right to grow industrial hemp and sell nonintoxicating CBD and CBG under current state and federal law. But if it gets you high, it will not be legal anymore. We will not be allowing the sale of THC-based intoxicants in any form. According to data from the Texas Poison Center Network, from 2018 to 2019 there were only 42 calls for exposure to semi-synthetic cannabis. From 2019 to 2024, following the passage of **HB 1325**, there were 3,129 calls. Members, that amounts to a 7,350 percent increase in the number of calls to poison control after consuming these products. Even more horrifically, the number of calls for patients aged zero through five increased 1,305 percent during the same period. In Fort Worth at Cook Children's hospital, there was a 51 percent increase in the number of children under the age of three who tested positive for THC between 2022 and 2023. And in the UT Houston emergency room, physicians are seeing an alarming rise of overdoses among children who inadvertently consume laced gummies or laced chocolate bars. But the crisis isn't just impacting our kids. In a survey conducted by public health researchers in my home county of Harris County, Texas, every single retail chain investigated sold food products marketed as containing more than 1,000 milligrams of THC per piece. It should be noted that this dosage is more than 100 times the legal serving in container limits for states such as California and Colorado, which are recreational marijuana states. Adults are consuming these high-potency products often without any knowledge of how much THC they're actually ingesting. And recovery experts are raising alarms about a sharp increase in patients presenting with psychosis, hallucinations, and suicidality related to synthetic THC use. And that's why this amendment doesn't just ban intoxicants; it also puts in place essential safeguards. Any product that remains legal under this bill will have to be properly labeled and placed in child-resistant packaging to ensure Texans know what's in the bottle and to help keep dangerous substances out of the hands of our kids.

Members, taking this bill back to its original form is about common sense, public safety, and legislative integrity. It aligns our laws with the original purpose of **HB 1325**, supports law enforcement, and protects our kids from powerful intoxicants disguised as harmless snacks and beverages.

REPRESENTATIVE TINDERHOLT: Thank you for this amendment. I've got a few questions that you and I have talked about a little bit. The first thing that comes to mind are veterans. We're getting a lot of discussion from veterans, and I want to cover TCUP, and some people may not know what that is. It's the Texas Compassionate Use Program, and it's used for people that have cancer or that are military members, maybe with PTSD, but it's for those types of people. Is it true that this session we expanded that program?

OLIVERSON: We expanded it massively.

TINDERHOLT: Is it also true that your amendment doesn't touch the Texas Compassionate Use Program?

OLIVERSON: The Texas Compassionate Use Program is specifically exempted from the provisions of this amendment.

TINDERHOLT: So I could use any of the different types of people that can go get a prescription, but I'm a veteran, so let's just use veterans. So veterans will still have access to THC through getting a prescription; is that correct?

OLIVERSON: Our veterans will have 10 times the access, at the minimum, that they currently have access to through TCUP.

TINDERHOLT: So let's talk because you're a medical professional. I'm a retired military guy. People are currently self-medicating by getting this THC that's potentially not very well regulated, and it could say 10 milligrams, and it could be six, it could be 20. What I'm getting to is, under TCUP, you have a medical professional that's overseeing this program and regulating at what point—how many milligrams is the right amount of milligrams for each individual. And then they also get the counseling and different programs with it versus self-medicating. Can you kind of talk about that for a minute?

OLIVERSON: Yes, absolutely, Representative. I appreciate the questions. The treatment of any medical condition, but particularly conditions that may be linked to mental health conditions, requires very often a multidisciplinary approach. And we know for a fact that that actually works much better than just giving somebody a pill. I'm sure this won't shock anybody in the room, but there are no miracle cures out there. So when somebody goes and sees a physician and gets a diagnosis, and maybe they have some PTSD or maybe they're struggling with anxiety, that involves getting a lot more than just a drug or a drink or something to put in your body. That involves seeing a counselor, that involves getting therapy, and that often involves peer support. So, you know, there's a letter that was put out yesterday from a physician—he's a former Navy doctor. He's been treating veterans with PTSD for 37 years. He's a strong believer in the use of cannabis and cannabis products to treat PTSD. But, as he points out, this absolutely has to be part of a comprehensive treatment program. The first thing I

learned, as I learned to treat chronic pain as an anesthesiology resident in my training, was that self-medication is often the first step to treatment failure. And folks need the accountability. They need the direction. They need the ability to know that the dosage, the purity, the consistency, and also the other therapies and treatments that go along with a medication are very, very important to getting and maintaining long-term remission from disease.

TINDERHOLT: It's interesting that you mention that. I think that was Corey Burchman—

OLIVERSON: It is.

TINDERHOLT: And I had talked to him several times when we were putting the Compassionate Use Program together. While we're talking about veterans, I want to mention that the body does care about veterans because we just passed a bill that tried ibogaine. Do you remember that bill?

OLIVERSON: I do. And I know you and I both voted for that. And I think almost everybody in this chamber, maybe everybody in this chamber, was in strong support of that.

TINDERHOLT: But let's not forget that this Texas Compassionate Use Program isn't just for veterans. It's a lot of other people who have access to this. I want to move on to the—I hear a lot about the Texas and the federal Farm Bills. You and I both know, I think it's 0.3 percent—can you kind of explain how that works? Because there's a lot of calculations.

OLIVERSON: So that's a great question, Representative. In some ways it is the question—if you're asking how did we get where we are and how did this unregulated marketplace become so pervasive in our state, 0.3 percent THC, less than 0.3 percent THC by dry weight, is how you differentiate between a hemp plant and another species of the marijuana family. So that was what was put in the farm bill for the purposes of agriculture. It was never meant to be a dosage meter for how we decide what's safe and what's legal when you're putting it in your body. So the reality and the problem is that when I tell you that as long as it's less than 0.3 percent by dry weight, the amount of milligrams of THC—active ingredient in that product—is entirely dependent on what the dry weight is that I put in that product to begin with. And that's how we get to these ridiculously high amounts where you see people picking up a beverage that has 60 milligrams of THC—which, by the way, I think—

OLIVERSON: Respectfully, I think that most sources would recommend a starting dose of no more than five through 10 milligrams even if you were trying to experience mild euphoria, at least that's what I read on the internet. But, of course, like any substance that has addictive potential, THC is no different in that you develop tolerance over time, and the body needs more and more and more.

TINDERHOLT: So I'm going to ask a couple more questions so that other people can get their opportunity up here. I've had a lot of questions from constituents asking about the lotions and the oils. Kind of explain how that impacts this, because I don't believe your amendment actually impacts the oils, and the lotions, and stuff.

OLIVERSON: So the amendment that I am offering, which takes the bill back to the senate engrossed version, doesn't prohibit the sale of CBD- or CBG-containing lotions or oils. But it would prohibit them from being sold if it contained THC. So that's sort of the differentiating factor there. And by the way, it is possible to manufacture those without THC.

TINDERHOLT: Two more questions. Is it fair to say that essentially, in the most generic terms, that your amendment gets rid of the retail THC—often times the stuff that is flavorful that children might like and want?

OLIVERSON: Yes, I think that's a great description. I mean, again, as I think I've said before, I want people to have access to medications that help them when they have medical conditions where those medications can be of benefit. But this is—what we're doing here is correcting a problem that was created in 2019, where we essentially created a pathway whereby people could sell drugs in corner stores across our state.

TINDERHOLT: We've heard someone we both know really well talk about the fact that there's about 8,000 of these stores that have popped up—many of them that are around schools—and there's somewhere around 1,000 McDonald's and 1,200 Starbucks. So in comparison, if you look at that—8,000 of these. So my final question is—and this is something I really want people to stop and listen to. If they're talking outside, I want them to hear this question because this is the most important question. Without your amendment, if the members vote for this bill and your amendment is not on there, are we essentially voting to legalize marijuana in the State of Texas?

OLIVERSON: That is my opinion, yes, because the active ingredient in hemp that folks are putting in these beverages is delta-9 THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. And they are going to be provided at levels that will be intoxicating. So yes, that is what I believe.

REPRESENTATIVE MORALES SHAW: I also rise on behalf of the veterans, and I believe my colleague, Representative Garcia, will have some things to say about veterans too. I have a lot to say, but I know there's members behind me, so I'm going to make it really brief. You and Representative Tinderholt talked about TCUP. And I know the goal here is to create a framework that is long overdue, especially when it comes to children. They should've never had access to these kinds of products—the synthetic ones that are unregulated, dangerous. We have no disagreement there. You're probably aware that the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which represents 1.5 million voices and thousands who have depended on these hemp products, came to every committee meeting, and they voiced their opposition against banning. They're all for regulating. They want to be able to have access. And I know the idea here between the TCUP bill, which I'm a joint

author on, and this **CSSB 3** bill is to regulate this industry finally—put some guardrails around it to make it safe so people can still have access to hemp but not be illegally consuming THC. I know the answer has been so far that veterans will now need to just get under TCUP, but we know that that's going to take time, number one. That's a big concern with the veteran community. The other concern is that they feel like they are getting shut out from something they have been able to use to continue—in fact, are you aware that they said that this has not only been a choice for them, but it's been a lifeline that has allowed them to reclaim their lives after military service? And they ask that the legislature not strip their therapeutic options that have transformed their lives but to regulate it appropriately.

Now, I agree. I agree. I want them under TCUP. I want them to be able to benefit from the compassionate use of THC—where doctors are involved. Where you said they have to go for therapy and understand how this product can benefit them, I get that. But we know it's going to take time, and the point I want to make right now is that on behalf of the veterans, my question is: Is it guaranteed that TCUP is going to pass the senate and be available to them? Because you're taking away, potentially, their freedom to choose this product that has, in their own words, saved their lives and transformed their lives. But will they have a guarantee that TCUP is going to pass? Because I recently heard that they are thinking of stripping away the portion that is in the TCUP right now that addresses chronic pain. And we know that that's a very huge issue with veterans. If they strip that out you're basically saying, "Well, we're not giving you this option. You can now be dependent on opioids and dangerous medications." So that's a question. That's one of my questions.

OLIVERSON: Okay, well, you said a lot—so let me just try to summarize. So, again, as I said—and I understand that the veterans' community is divided on this—but I think that the reality is that those who make a career out of helping people recover from the conditions that you're talking about that veterans are seeking relief from, I believe very strongly that the only pathway to long-term improvement is by seeking a coordinated medical effort that involves more than just drinking a drink or taking a gummy. You're talking about the difference between seeking treatment and self-medication. And self-medication is an issue as old as time, but the reality is that it doesn't lead to long-term improvement in the overall mental health condition. So there's about a billion studies out there that would back me up on that. It takes more than just a drug, right? So that is part of the issue here.

With respect to your questions regarding the TCUP bill—I know chronic pain is important. Chairman King and I were the ones that fought for that and got that put into the TCUP bill as we passed that bill out of the house. And you better believe I'm going to be fighting for that on the other side, because I think that's of critical importance. Let me be clear, I don't ever want somebody to be denied access to a medication that may be of benefit, whether it's ibogaine, whether it's MDMA, whether it's psilocybin, whether it's THC—I point this out because these are all bills we've already voted on and sent out of this house to the senate that show some promise and some mobility to provide relief. But the thing is, all

of those bills were structured around the idea that you seek medical treatment, and then you get better as a result of the treatment plan that you and your provider come up with. You don't drive to the corner store and self-medicate and expect long-term relief. So that's my answer.

MORALES SHAW: Well, they have been self-medicating, and it's been saving their lives. And we pass a ton of bills here every day to benefit veterans—college tuition, free state park entrance, spousal benefits. But would you agree with me that none of that matters if they're not alive? We know that we lose more than one veteran every day in Texas to suicide, and this has been a remedy for them. So I just want us to be careful—

OLIVERSON: I want them to continue to have access to the remedy. I want it to be part of a treatment plan that actually lessens the risk of adverse outcomes, including suicide, which we can do a much better job of that. Self-medication is not a mechanism for long-term improvement in mental health conditions.

MORALES SHAW: And what the veterans have—the ones who have been dependent on these products have said, "Texas trusted us with sophisticated weapons systems worth billions of dollars to defend American freedoms abroad. Shouldn't lawmakers trust us to make responsible choices about our own health care at home?" I just want to point that out. I just hope that we find a balance, because I don't want there to be a gap between getting rid of this access that they have right now and they're saying "we're smart enough to make our own choices." We're not talking about children here. And when we get TCUP up and running, that is comprehensive. I appreciate your commitment to chronic pain. It's a huge part of this bill that will help thousands of veterans to, basically, stay alive and to continue to be with us. I don't want to continue because I want other people to say stuff.

REPRESENTATIVE MONEY: I have two lines of questioning here. In fact, I'll let Mr. Cook handle some of that. But we've talked about veterans and their access to these medications. I think you've handled that brilliantly. Having different kinds of medications that we treat people for, whether they're veterans, whether they're elderly, disabled, or people just going through a rough time—I think the idea that we need to have treatment plans for them that work makes perfect sense. But I'm concerned about the current state of the law as it is with THC. And I'm concerned with the way that this bill without your amendment sits, because it provides almost unrestricted access to people who are not part of the group that we've been talking about. So I would ask: What kind of societal harms and individual harms are there when we have kind of a free access to THC? Have you looked at any of those studies?

OLIVERSON: Well, Representative, I haven't specifically looked at a study like that, but what I will tell you is that, you know, the net effect of legalizing intoxicants is typically not positive for any society. Whether you tax it or you don't tax it, you never end up getting back to what it cost to enforce it and deal with the societal, social, and individual consequences that come from it. And I think it's important to point out that although the THC substance has not shown

to be as dangerous in a single dose as fentanyl, it does show many of the same types of effects on the body that other drugs of addiction show. We see tolerance. We see dependence—it was just mentioned dependence a minute ago. And I would point out that there's some very convincing research that shows that high-dose THC products given to certain individuals may actually induce a psychotic break. And we have, indeed, seen people who have taken a product like this for the first time and have wound up floridly psychotic. There was a mother I was talking to the other day whose son stepped in front of a train after he took a THC beverage. He was a 21-year-old, her son, but he believed Jesus was telling him to move to California and save souls and stepped in front of a train and lost his life. So, you know, I think if that's what you're getting at, I don't think these things are ever positive for society. And look, we can have this conversation about a wide variety of substances, and there are some that would probably say we should legalize marijuana, or we should legalize heroin, or we should legalize cocaine, or we should legalize this or that or the other thing—but I do not believe that the evidence shows that that's a net positive for the people of our state.

MONEY: Yeah, I'm going to give you a few stats that are all from studies from reputable journals in the past two years. A 2023 Lancet Psychiatry study, one of the top medical journals in the world, found that high-potency THC products, which is above 10 percent THC, increase psychosis risk by 40 percent in young adults. And as we've already talked about, Texas' current hemp market already offers products that exceed 30 percent.

OLIVERSON: Ninety percent.

MONEY: Ninety percent. We're talking about very, very high potency that is going to increase psychosis risk in young adults. In a 2024 study in pediatrics, we found a 30 percent adolescent cannabis use in states that legalize THC—adolescents. The Journal of American Medical Association Pediatrics said that Colorado's legalization led to a 50 percent increase in youth cannabis use disorder rates. We're talking about children, people who are still in junior high, that are having access to this kind of medication. This is not just adults making a recreational decision or even a self-medication treatment. This is adults, I mean children, who are having this. One final thing: A 2024 University of Texas study estimated that the potential health care and productivity losses for THC use in Texas is over $1.2 billion. Did you know that?

OLIVERSON: I did not know that.

MONEY: That is 2024. The University of Texas said that the State of Texas is losing over $1.2 billion a year in health care costs and productivity losses because of unregulated THC use. I appreciate your amendment. I thank you for bringing it, and I hope that the body will pass it.

REPRESENTATIVE J. GARCIA: Thank you, Dr. Oliverson. You know, I really appreciate you, and I know that you have a good heart for healing our community and our veterans, so I'm not going to sit here and act like you're intentionally trying to hurt our veteran community. But I do feel obligated, as one of probably

10 percent of this body that has ever served in uniform, to advocate for my veterans now. Sir, are you aware that for some veterans access to mental health treatment is a barrier?

OLIVERSON: Well, I want to fix that. I want them to have access to mental health treatment. And as I've already stated, I think that comprehensive mental health treatment is much more likely to reverse the adverse effects of the mental illness and lead to long-term sustainable improvement in the mental health condition.

J. GARCIA: And many of us who have served in combat roles come back from combat not quite the same. And some of us are what you call "voluntold" to seek mental health treatment. Now, the second we're "voluntold" to seek mental health treatment, we can pretty much kiss our careers goodbye. We're no longer of use to the military once we are "voluntold" to seek medical treatment. So could you understand why some veterans would have a resistance to seeking mental health assistance?

OLIVERSON: Yes, I certainly can. And that's why I think it's important to point out that TCUP is not in any way affiliated with the VA medical system. And actually the bill that we passed out of this chamber creates some very specific parameters for enrollment in TCUP that would protect a veteran from having to be identified or labeled as having a medical or mental health condition that they did not want to be labeled as.

J. GARCIA: And who is the regulating authority of TCUP?

OLIVERSON: So that is under—I believe that is under Department of State Health Services.

J. GARCIA: And is that information freely accessible to any department?

OLIVERSON: No.

J. GARCIA: Who has access to that information?

OLIVERSON: That is confidential medical information protected by federal law under HIPAA.

J. GARCIA: Are you aware that the TCUP is also a barrier for veterans seeking treatment?

OLIVERSON: That's what we're trying to fix. That's why you worked with me to expand the TCUP program. We passed that bill last week. I'm very proud of the fact, as I said earlier, it increases the number of licenses by over tenfold what is currently available. We anticipate there will be increased demand when this bill passes with the amendment on it. So we want to be prepared for that.

J. GARCIA: I know that we're running short on time, and I want to be mindful. Can you please share with me some legal, logical—as a medical professional—treatments for PTSD and TBI—some of the injuries that veterans experience?

OLIVERSON: So I am not an expert on the treatment of PTSD. I am basing my statements to you today on the testimonies of the experts that have decades and decades and decades of experience in treating veterans that are struggling with PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other service-connected injuries that they've sustained.

J. GARCIA: Would you agree that often times Xanax and Klonopin are prescribed to our veterans to help quiet the nightmares in their heads—just to function every day?

OLIVERSON: I can't speak to that. I don't know the answer to that.

J. GARCIA: That is true. Are you aware that other pharmaceuticals like Abilify, Lamictal, also—take your pick of any of the pharmaceuticals that you see on TV that are meant to help with psychotropics. Are you aware that the military will give us any psychotropics that we need to include Xanax and Klonopin?

OLIVERSON: I am not aware of that.

J. GARCIA: As a medical professional, do you agree that those substances are severely addictive and very dangerous?

OLIVERSON: I think, Representative, that the reality is that in the treatment of these conditions, the best treatment is multimodal, and I think the studies would back me up 10,000 percent on that. So there may be different pharmacological therapies that are tried, but ultimately it's a combination of that and other things. As I said in my statements earlier, there is no magic bullet. There is no pill you can take or drink that you can take that is going to magically fix the damage that you sustained serving our country—and I'm grateful for your service, by the way. But multimodal therapy is what works. You've got to get into a medical treatment program to access that. You're not going to access that at a corner store.

J. GARCIA: Sir, as a medical professional—you're aware that I served 20 years in the military medical field. I was trained as a combat medic. I'm a dental hygienist and a dental therapist by trade. But we also understand that our Hippocratic Oath makes sure that we provide all treatment options available to make sure that we are causing no harm.

OLIVERSON: Correct, and I believe that's what this—I think that is what the TCUP bill, not this bill, but that is what the TCUP bill does.

J. GARCIA: Would you agree that THC is a far less harmful therapeutic method than Xanax and Klonopin?

OLIVERSON: I would say that it is far less prescribed, and it is far less researched, and that the data is probably not very conclusive for me to be able to make that statement.

J. GARCIA: Representative Oliverson, I have a very great respect for you, sir. I just wanted to let you know that I firmly believe that a total ban on THC products is establishing a very dangerous precedent for our veterans who have access to relief now. And I think that's very critical when we're losing veterans every day. And because of that, I humbly, humbly oppose your amendment. I am for

100 percent regulations, and I think we do need that. But I just ask that we please not eliminate functions and options that are currently available that if we're honest—I looked it up—I have seen no deaths caused by THC in Texas. I've looked it up. I've seen no deaths caused by delta-9 in Texas. And the very last thing that we could possibly do is sell out more snacks. So at the end of the day, we please want to maintain these options for our veterans.

REPRESENTATIVE FRANK: I have two completely different questions. One: Are you aware that the lieutenant governor just stepped up and said what he thought about the TCUP? He said, "I am in full support of expanding the TCUP program. We will expand licenses and have satellite locations for the first time for prescribed products from doctors for our veterans and those in need. The TCUP expansion is the latest program designed to help." Are you aware that that was made public just now?

OLIVERSON: I was not aware of that, but I can tell you that the lieutenant governor and I have spoken about the TCUP bill. I know he's spoken to several members in this chamber about it, and I believe he sees the value and importance of it. And I know that he knows how important it is to the members of this body.

FRANK: Well, I do believe—I've been long-term on the Public Health Committee, but I do believe that that is the right way to do it. You do it, but you do it through prescription. You use it as a drug. It's a safe drug when used with a doctor. So a totally different question that I wanted to ask, which has to do—the reason we did the hemp originally was for agricultural use. There are some people that are doing it correctly. We have a major employer in our area that has invested a tremendous amount of money in it, and I am very concerned. I am supportive of your amendment. I want to make sure that we are not using it for consumption, but hemp in the field may have a small amount of THC, but yet the product, when manufactured, has no THC. Will this bill create a problem if somebody has a small amount of THC in the field, but yet it is going to be produced out in the manufacturing process? Because that greatly concerns me.

OLIVERSON: I think that's a great question, Representative, and I think I can answer it very definitively. This bill, with this amendment on it, does nothing to regulate agriculture. What it regulates is consumable hemp products for human consumption.

FRANK: Okay. So if I have invested and I have hemp in the field that has a small amount of THC, and I am going to be selling it to somebody who is going to be taking that THC out in the manufacturing process, I have nothing to worry about?

OLIVERSON: Not an issue. Well, the only issue that you might run into is—you would run into some issues if you were refining that here. But under a federal law and interstate commerce provisions, a farmer in Texas can absolutely raise hemp, and it can be sold. It could even be sold out of state for the purposes of refining and extracting the THC if they so chose. This bill does not regulate agriculture.

FRANK: Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate your amendment. It's a good one.

REPRESENTATIVE J. JONES: So Dr. Oliverson, I have a few questions. Is it true that this bill is trying to stop people from buying THC products like delta-8 at gas stations and smoke shops?

OLIVERSON: A thousand percent.

J. JONES: Okay. Is it also true that this bill does not shut down the Compassionate Use Program? Is that accurate?

OLIVERSON: The Compassionate Use Program is specifically exempted from this bill on the first page of the amendment.

J. JONES: So with the Compassionate Use Program, they can still get low doses of THC if they have a qualifying condition? Is that accurate?

OLIVERSON: Absolutely.

J. JONES: Under this amendment, only doctors can prescribe THC if it's needed? Is that accurate?

OLIVERSON: Well, let me be careful how I answer your question to be clear. This bill—the intersection that this bill has with the TCUP program is that the TCUP program is specifically carved out of the provisions of this amendment. That's a completely different bill as far as the prescribing and how that would work. What this deals with is consumable hemp products for recreational use.

J. JONES: So if I have a condition, I would have to go to a doctor's office. They'd have to prescribe it. Am I right so far?

OLIVERSON: Yes.

J. JONES: And after they prescribe it, I take my prescription where?

OLIVERSON: You would take it to a licensed provider of the medication. Again, this is in the TCUP program. It's not in this bill.

J. JONES: But I still think people want to understand how they cross.

OLIVERSON: Totally get it, but you're right. You're right, that's how it would work.

J. JONES: So how much does it cost? If you know.

OLIVERSON: I do not. I do not know, but I will say this: I do know that because historically there have only been two active providers in the state under the TCUP program for the last several years, it has been far more expensive than it should be. So one of the things we did through the other legislation, which is not this bill, is we massively, massively—10 times—expanded the amount of competition in order to make it more accessible and more affordable.

J. JONES: So I was concerned about that. So are there going to be certain licenses?

OLIVERSON: Of course.

J. JONES: And then the question becomes, is there an outlay of money to be able to be one of the licenses? I mean, do you have any idea how many licenses there are going to be?

OLIVERSON: Representative, respectfully, I don't have **HB 46** in front of me, so I don't know the exact costs of the licenses. But, yes, there is a licensing process. There is an application process, and then a license is granted, and then there is a licensing process. I apologize, but I don't have those details right in front of me. But, yes, there is a process for that.

J. JONES: So there won't be bans? It's not a total—I keep hearing it's a total ban, it's a total ban, it's a total ban. Is that true?

OLIVERSON: That is not true. It is a ban on the sale of consumable hemp products containing any amount of THC.

J. JONES: And presumably, if there's more licenses, then there will be more competition, and if there's more competition, then the costs will not be—

OLIVERSON: The costs should drop dramatically. And especially as demand increases—as people go into the TCUP program looking for relief, looking for treatment for medical conditions where THC has been shown to be beneficial—I would expect prices to come down dramatically.

J. JONES: And there's been a lot of talk about PTSD with veterans. I think I've shared this before, but my dad was a veteran. He was a marine. My uncle was a marine. Both of them came back and were not the same, and they killed themselves. I suspect they both had PTSD.

OLIVERSON: I'm so sorry.

J. JONES: Thank you. What about those people? We've heard that veterans, I guess, are used to being able to go get THC wherever they get it from. Now, they'll just have to go to a medical doctor who will treat them?

OLIVERSON: That's right. I think it's worth pointing out that the bill that we passed contained language that allowed a veteran with any medical condition to qualify to participate in the TCUP program. So we were trying to be very sensitive.

[Representative Wu raised a point of order against further consideration of **CSSB 3** under Rule 4, Section 18(b); Rule 4, Section 20; and Rule 4, Section 32(b)(10), of the House Rules on the grounds that the witness list is inaccurate. The point of order withdrawn.]

[Representative Wu raised a point of order against further consideration of **CSSB 3** under Rule 4, Section 18(b), and Rule 4, Section 32(b)(10), of the House Rules on the grounds that the witness list is inaccurate. The point of order was withdrawn.]

[Amendment No. 3 by Oliverson was laid before the house.]

OLIVERSON: This amendment just very simply makes this not applicable to medical research—allowing a hospital, medical school, or institution of higher education engaged in active research with THC—they would not be subject to the prohibition contained in this bill. It is acceptable to me, and I move adoption.

[Amendment No. 3 was adopted by Record No. 3189.]

[Amendment No. 4 by Moody was laid before the house.]

REPRESENTATIVE MOODY: This amendment looks very large. It's three pages, but I want to just let y'all understand what it does. This actually only impacts one section of Dr. Oliverson's amendment, and that deals with the possession of consumable hemp products. It changes it in one significant way. It changes the punishment regime for minors—for children. As we've talked about before, 17-year-olds are adults. They have a different treatment here because they may have had prior offenses when they were minors or children—10 to 16—that would be subject to our justice system for juveniles. What this would do is it would take the penalty—where the penalty right now sits in the amendment is a Class A misdemeanor. It would drop that to a Class C on a first offense. Then it has a ramp-up for folks that have done this multiple times so that there's not the same conduct treated the same way when we have multiple offenses. There's a ramp up out of that. The reason being, while I'd like to claim this idea as my own—it certainly fits in line with the way that I've worked on things like this before. Texas Medical Association and also the Texas Pediatric Society were folks that talked to both Dr. Oliverson's office and mine about handling juveniles differently. If this sounds repetitive, that's because it is. We handle juveniles differently in our criminal justice system. All this would do is—in the adult system we're going to leave it as it is. For our juveniles, we are going to stairstep them, but we're going to start them with a Class C offense that is expungible. I'll tell you why that's important. If you leave it as a Class A misdemeanor, that's going to be declared delinquent conduct or could be considered delinquent conduct, and those records would only be eligible to be sealed. And if those records are only sealed and not expunged, government agencies, including universities—so young people who may want to go to school who maybe made a mistake young in life, if they want to get an occupational license to get a job, this stuff would still be attainable if it's only sealed. If they want to join the military, if it's only sealed—

REPRESENTATIVE HINOJOSA: Representative Moody, let me check for understanding. I was speaking to the author of the amendment because I'm trying to understand the overall amendment and then the impact of your amendment to the amendment. Under the Oliverson amendment, we are criminalizing possession of hemp with THC?

MOODY: There's a few different criminal penalties that are in the amendment, and this one only touches the possession part. There's manufacturing and delivery. There's the other ones that are a little bit more serious offenses. This is dealing with mere possession.

HINOJOSA: Okay, so the amendment criminalizes the possession, and your amendment says it's a different penalty—not a Class A misdemeanor for minors. And depending on the number of times that they are—

MOODY: Yes. And it does it in a little bit of a strange way, because we have 17-year-olds that are adults in our system. It does treat them slightly differently, because let's say you have repeat offenses, but they were a child 10 to 16 when

they had their first or second, then 17—so they're an adult—when they had their third. It's going to treat them a little bit differently so that that is captured, because we have a weird system in Texas. But the 10- to 16-year-olds are going to be treated as Class C misdemeanors and then ratchet up from there. It's going to have driver's license implications for them. So this is not without accountability. They're going to have to do community service. They're also going to take substance misuse education. And the community service that they have to complete must relate to the prevention or misuse of drugs. We are tailoring this to teach these young people—if we're going to make this a crime, we're going to give them the ability to first off do the right thing. And if they've gotten in trouble, they can get this off their record. So it's not going to have impacts if they want to join the military later, they want to go to college or university, or they want to get an occupational license. Let's give them that opportunity. And then it stair-steps up from there in terms of multiple offenses, because in prior conversations about conduct like this, one of the major refrains I've heard is, "What are we doing for those who continue to engage in this activity that we say should be criminalized?" So there is a stairstep here as well. So that's what the amendment does. I wanted to take a little bit of time to explain it just because it is a large amendment, but that is essentially what it does. It is my understanding that it is acceptable to the author. I appreciate Dr. Oliverson accepting the amendment.

[Amendment No. 4 was adopted by Record No. 3190.]

REPRESENTATIVE WU: It is 2025, and we're still rehashing parts of Reefer Madness from the '50s and '60s. We thought that we'd gotten past this—that we've grown, that we've gotten smarter, learned more, built more knowledge, and we were past this. But here we are, back again, trying to go backward in time. I know that we talked a lot about the dangers of THC, and while this is a substance that children should not have contact with, I think the dangers are way far overblown. We talk about how dangerous it is. We talk about how many people call into poison control lines because they're experiencing these things for the first time, and they don't know what's going on, and they're not sure how they're supposed to feel.

What we don't talk about is how many fatalities there have been from this—how many overdoses from THC. Zero. None, because the LD50, the lethal dose of THC, is extremely high—basically to where the medical reports say you wouldn't be able to physically consume that much THC. You would have to be injected intravenously to get to those levels. That's what they discovered using animal studies and so on and so forth. They would have to inject more than 100 milligrams intravenously into animals per kilogram of their weight—100 milligrams per kilogram of animal weight, basically to the point where there's so much THC in their system that it crystallizes in the bloodstream. And they said no human could possibly ingest or smoke that much. It's not possible.

We talked about how this is a beneficial program. This is a beneficial policy that has helped so many Texans, including veterans. People say that we have an argument between the veteran community. There's no argument. The

overwhelming majority of veterans' groups—you received those letters on your desk yesterday. The overwhelming majority of veterans are aggressively supporting legalization, supporting keeping the law in a regulated state, and not banning it. This is also the attitude of Texans overall. Texans, as a whole, do not want something that they've had access to for the last five years—something that they've enjoyed recreationally, that has helped them medically, and that has made their lives better. They don't want this banned either, and they have told you that loudly and repeatedly. They have called your offices. They have written letters. They have done everything they could.

We say the TCUP program is enough. If the TCUP program was enough, veterans wouldn't be asking for this. If the TCUP program was enough and was actually a viable program that actually did what's it's supposed to do and wasn't a very limited program, there would be no clamor for this. There would be no outrage that we're going to ban this. But we know that the TCUP program, even expanded, does not serve everyone. Dr. Oliverson talks about how if somebody is in bad shape that they should have long-term care. They should come with a long-term plan. That would be wonderful if all the veterans who need this could get into programs or were willing to get into programs.

The point is that many people, yes, they do self-medicate with THC because it makes their lives better. And we should support this. You know why? Because if they were not self-medicating with THC, they would be self-medicating with alcohol and opioids. That's the point. And we know this because that's what they were doing before. Veterans were begging for legalization—begging for any kind of compassionate use program because their alternatives were opioids and alcohol. We talk about how dangerous THC is, but we don't talk about how dangerous alcohol is. How many people die from liver cirrhosis? How many people have fatal heart attacks because of their abuse of alcohol? We don't talk about that. But we talk about how many people call into a poison control line? Did any of those people actually die? No.

This also brings us back. I have spent a decade in this body talking about the problems of how our marijuana policies in this state basically round up the lowest-level offenders—kids, your neighbors, and people who just want to relax. And we say because you choose to use this—because you found that this is more helpful for you, we're going to give you a criminal record. We're going to put you in jail. We're going to do all these things. We have talked about how this is an injustice. We talk about how it's injustice, but here we are saying let's go back to that. Let's go do that again. That's what really I don't understand. Because when I came into this body a decade ago, I came in with members of the Tea Party. I came in with members of the Republican Party who said they were for small government. They were for letting adults do what adults want to do as long as it didn't hurt other people. That's what their discussions were all the time. Why is government interfering in this? Why are you engaging in this if it's only done by consenting adults? Regulate kids. Let people know what's inside the materials. And let people make their own decisions. Because if we're saying that we should ban things that are bad for you, why don't we ban cigarettes? Why don't we ban

alcohol? Why don't we ban a lot of things? Because we say no. We want adults to make their own decisions. We want adults who don't have problems abusing things to be able to have access to it and use it as they see fit.

Everything complained about by Dr. Oliverson, every single point that Dr. Oliverson brought up about why THC should be banned—a healthy, robust, regulated market would solve those problems. And that's what we're trying to do on this bill without this amendment. I would urge you to vote no on this amendment. Don't take away something that Texans like and want and often need.

REPRESENTATIVE LOWE: I rise today in strong support of this amendment. As a combat veteran who served this country and suffered greatly from PTSD, I do not take this issue lightly. I stand before you today only by the grace of God, and I thank him for the healing strength and purpose that allows me to stand alongside you fine patriots in this chamber. Some are using veterans with PTSD as a reason to oppose this bill. They argue that hemp is safer than pills made by big pharma. Let me be clear, there are benefits from hemp products for some individuals, but as someone who has lived through the darkness of war and it's aftermath, I say this sincerely, stop using veterans like me as a vehicle to push your unregulated hemp products. There's a difference between compassion and exploitation. **CSSB 3** doesn't criminalize veterans. It doesn't outlaw compassion. What it does is it places reasonable, commonsense regulations to keep potentially dangerous unregulated products, often marketed to children, off our shelves. That's not an attack on veterans. That's called responsible governance. I urge you to support **CSSB 3** and this amendment. Let's protect the public, uphold the law, and stop hiding behind those who served as a shield for an unregulated market.

REPRESENTATIVE ANCHÍA: I won't be long. Bans don't work. Products will find their way to market. Since 2019, these products have been regulated through the Department of State Health Services that has, I think I recall from testimony, three investigators throughout the state. The committee substitute fixes that by putting boots on the ground to enforce a highly regulated, highly taxed regime through TABC. TABC is the most equipped agency to process licenses, review products for approval, and enforce these regulations. They're accustomed to this process through alcohol regulation, and it is better fitted to this program.

Members, if we learned anything from Prohibition, we know that bans don't work. Everybody that I talked to on this issue, not on this floor but out in communities, say, "Hey, we need to highly regulate it. We need to tax it. We need to police it. We need to enforce it. But the ban will not work." I really want to commend the author of the bill for working so hard on this. He's put hours into this, because he too shares the knowledge that what we have is not an unregulated marketplace; it's an underregulated marketplace. We set up the program, and we just never did right with the regulatory regime that would make it safe, effective, and easily enforceable. And that's what **CSSB 3** does.

I think the chairman has struck the right balance between enforcement and use in the marketplace—which we know will occur either in a legal marketplace or, if this amendment passes, in the black market. Right? All the things that Dr. Oliverson talked about—and he's right about those things—they're dealt with

in the bill. They're dealt with in this committee substitute. If you're concerned about synthetics, they're dealt with in the substitute. If you're concerned about enforcement, it's dealt with in the substitute. If you're concerned that your people don't want it, it's dealt with in the substitute. Your county could go dry through popular election. All those things are covered in the bill, and this amendment would undo all of them. There are packaging restrictions. There are criminal penalties. There's age limitations. You must be 21. All of that gets undone. And what do we return to? A completely unregulated black market where these products will find their way to young people today.

If anybody is to blame about the state of affairs, it's us in underregulating this marketplace. We chose to be hands-off. Yes, bad actors entered. Yes, licenses were too easy to get. Yes, people popped up. This bill would clean all that up and would regulate about 80 percent—pardon me, would get rid of about 80 percent of the marketplace—those bad actors that we want to get rid of. If you adopt this amendment, members, you're going to be driving people into the black market. You're going to be criminalizing veterans. You're going to be criminalizing young people—all for possession. The Moody amendment—thank you, Dr. Oliverson, for taking it—that amendment to the amendment will make sure that our youngest people, minors, do not suffer these penalties. But if you vote for this, you're criminalizing your neighbor who uses this stuff. You're criminalizing Grandma, who may use this stuff for her knees. Maybe her kids offer it to her to help her with her pain. You're turning those people into criminals with a total ban. You're turning them into criminals, and I don't think that's what any Texan wants, members. So members, I hope you'll join me in supporting the underlying bill. It's a very, very good bill—well thought out. Many hours of work went into it in the State Affairs Committee. I hope you support the chairman and reject this amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE LEO WILSON: Members, I know it's really late, but as Mr. Wu was mentioning, we're going back in time. I grew up in the '60s and went through the '70s with Cheech and Chong and all of that. This is not the same. When we passed the hemp bill, we did not think we were getting into THC. I'm going to tell you a story from the heart. I called my daughter—I have five kids. I called my daughter, who we had a real-life experience with cannabis and THC. She spent 71 days on life support. I asked her if I could tell her story.

This is a good kid. This is a kid that doesn't drink, doesn't do drugs, but she had anxiety really, really bad. She graduated from high school and got a great job in Nevada, where it is legal. You can get it like a pizza on the street corner. And she decided that that helped her more, and she never really did like taking that medication. So she started self-medicating. And I knew about it. I even went to a store with her. They were selling it—this one's good for your stomach. This one's good if you can't sleep. This one's good for this. No warning, no labels, no nothing. I thought, you know what, what can it hurt? It's cannabis, right? It's not going to hurt, and it seems to help her. And it did for a while, until it didn't. And it became her worst nightmare.

Her boss called me one day and said, "You daughter's losing weight. Your daughter's not showing up to work." And she had a great boss that kept her on insurance for a very long time as she went in and out of emergency rooms. On finally the twelfth emergency room, the doctor pulled me over, and he said, "You know what your daughter has, don't you?" And I said, "no" because we had run every test in the world to figure out why she was losing weight fast, why she can't keep anything down. And he said, "She has what's called cannabis hyperemesis syndrome. And she's addicted to the THC, and she can't stop." And I had no idea what that was. You can go home and look it up—cannabis hyperemesis syndrome, CHS. He said in states where it's legalized, 20 percent of our emergency room patients are seen with this. I had no idea—none whatsoever. So I started researching it while she got sicker and sicker and sicker.

She found relief in hot showers. That's one of the things that they do for relief—until it scalded her skin. She ended up being life-flighted by Angel Flight to a hospital in Denver. I was frantic, and I flew out. It's something else to see your child with tubes in and out of their nose and down their throat, and you don't know if they're going to live or not for 71 days. It was our nightmare. And it was caused from the THC and from what's called cannabis hyperemesis syndrome. She was allergic to the cannabis. We had no idea that cannabis could do this to a person. Her bones were sticking out of her. She weighed 85 pounds. Her hair was falling out. We honestly did not know if she would live or not.

One of the very tragic things that I learned was she had to go through, once in recovery, what's called refeeding syndrome. Never heard of that before either. Eighty percent of the people that they removed from the concentration camps were so malnourished and starved and so much in pain that they did not survive even after rescue because of refeeding syndrome. They just could not eat ever again. It was tragic. It's horrific to watch what she had to go through for recovery. And I just want to say, Mady, you're my hero. Mady wanted to die on multiple occasions; she was in so much pain, but I think she survived for me. She knew I would unconditionally love her no matter what and that I would not be able to sustain or survive if she had passed away.

We had to do tough love many times because the THC was addictive. Even after all that, she had a second time and a third time and even a fourth—because she kept thinking maybe it's the dose, maybe it's the kind, maybe it's this and that, and I won't go through this again. But she did. And when she came to Texas, we took her back here, and she went through Nar-Anon. Luckily, you don't have to say what drug, or you're not supposed to say what drug, you were addicted to because she would have been embarrassed to say, "I was hooked on cannabis because of the THC." Because people wouldn't have believed it here. They think it's healthy. They think it's going to have positive benefits. But for us, it was our worst nightmare. Thank you, Mady. She has been fine for four years. But I always worry about her, because it's the same thing. She can never go back. She can never have cannabis ever again. She can't be around people with it—just like an alcoholic. But she helps other people now. She started a home—it's called

Alexander House—for other people that are in recovery. I'm so proud of her for the courage that it took to come back to life and to recover and to help other people and to let me tell her story tonight.

THC is not just a little thing. I'm sure it will help many people, but we can expand the Compassionate Use Program. We can do many things like that where we know it helps people. But this is killing kids. It really is. We watched her almost die. So I'm asking you to support Dr. Oliverson's amendment tonight for all the moms like me who thought it was just going to be something okay. We're good with it if it helps you. We're good. We're cool. That's okay—until it wasn't. Thank you for allowing me to tell her story to you. Thank you, Mady, for permission to let me tell it. I appreciate you. I love you more than anything. Thank you for your courage. Thank you for coming back to us. We love you.

REPRESENTATIVE REYNOLDS: The majority of the hemp business owners are small businesses. We know that small businesses are the economic engines that drive our economy. In fact, the hemp industry is one of the fastest-growing markets in the United States. In 2020 alone, the hemp-derived CBD industry was valued at over $4 billion and continues to expand at a rapid pace. In Texas, a state that prides itself on being business-friendly, the industry offers thousands of jobs, contributes to our significant tax base, and positions Texas as a leader in the future of agriculture, biotechnology, and wellness.

The ban of hemp-derived THC would send a clear and resounding message that Texas is not open to innovation and risks stifling an industry with incredible potential growth in our home state. In fact, based on the LBB, we know that the hemp in Texas, if it's banned, would destroy over 50,000 jobs and cost Texas $1.6 billion in wages overnight—directly harming hardworking Texans who have built legal businesses like many of your constituents in your districts. A reckless ban would cost the state—this is based on the LBB; these aren't my projections—millions in lost tax revenue, nearly $20 million by 2027 alone—money that should be funding our schools and infrastructure. It directly attacks Texas farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses by outlawing products they legally cultivate, process, and sell under current law. A total ban tells Texans what they can and cannot purchase or possess in a legal market, restricting personal freedom and ignoring the will of the majority of Texans.

Now, let's look at the public health benefit. We must consider the reality of the lives of people who use these products. Many of these Texans use these products as a means of managing pain, stress, anxiety, and many of them for coping with insomnia. These are not casual or frivolous choices. These are individuals who rely on these products daily or weekly as an alternative to pharmaceuticals that have created the opioid crisis—with fewer side effects and lower risks of addiction. For many of these Texans, this is their lifeline. This has reduced anxiety. This has reduced levels of suicide. By banning these products, we're taking away a natural, nonaddictive alternative to these prescription drugs that can sometimes do substantially more harm than good.

It's important to remember that responsible adults should have the right to make informed decisions about what goes into their bodies. We should not, especially most of my conservative friends in here, want to allow the government

to take that away from them. We know that the bill as filed, rather than a complete ban, is what we should be focusing on—a clear alternative to effective regulation. We know that the hemp industry, like many others, can have its share of bad actors. That's why proper testing, labeling, and consumer protections are critical. But banning a product that does not address the underlying issue simply removes options for consumers and penalizes responsible businesses. Texas can and should create a legal framework that allows the sale of these products while ensuring safety, transparency, and quality control. We have the capability, the resources, and the creativity to make this happen.

Now, I want to talk about personal freedom. Many of us talk about this a lot—personal freedom and responsibility. At the end of the day, this is the question: Shouldn't it be up to Texans to make decisions about what they put into their bodies? We live in a country founded on the principles of liberty and personal responsibility. If adults wish to use a product that is derived from hemp, a natural substance, then they should be free to do so provided it is responsibly produced and regulated. By banning hemp-derived THC, we are essentially saying that we, as the government, know better than you how to manage your own body and well-being. That's not the Texas way. We trust our people to make responsible choices every single day, from health care to their finances to the cars that they drive. Why should this be any different?

Finally, we must consider the broader picture. This bill is not just about hemp-derived THC; it's part of a larger pattern of restrictive measures that undermine the rights of Texans to make their own choices. If we give in to such measures, we risk setting a dangerous precedent—one that could open the door to more intrusive government action on a range of issues. It simply would open up the floodgates. The time to stand up for people's rights is now. This amendment, if passed, would be a setback for individual rights, economic opportunity, and public health. So I ask you to think about the overwhelming majority of Texans that support hemp. Think about their health and well-being. Think about all of the businesses that are creating jobs and contributing to our economy. Think about the values we hold near and dear—freedom, personal responsibility, and the pursuit of happiness. Rather than a ban, let us work together as the bill author to regulate this industry, ensuring that consumers can safely and responsibly make the choices that are best for them. Let us protect both our economy and our personal freedoms. And most importantly, let's stand up for the Texans who depend on these products.

[Representative Wu raised a point of order against further consideration of **CSSB 3** under Rule 11, Section 2, and Rule 11, Section 3, of the House Rules on the grounds that the committee substitute is not germane and that the committee substitute changes the original purpose of the bill. The point of order was withdrawn.]

[Representative Wu raised a point of order against further consideration of **CSSB 3** under Rule 4, Section 18(b), of the House Rules on the grounds that the witness list is inaccurate. The point of order was withdrawn.]

J. GARCIA: As I mentioned earlier, I'm part of less than 10 percent of this body that has ever served in uniform. Now, I respect my colleague, Representative Lowe, as a fellow combat veteran, but I think it's very important that we get on the record the truth about what is happening today. My colleague made a statement saying that people are using our veterans to make a point or whatnot. However, it's important that our veterans have representation—because one thing that I know for a fact is that I had my staff go through every e-mail that I have received this session. I asked them specifically for e-mails from people asking us to ban THC and e-mails from people asking us to legalize THC. Well, I know all of you probably did the same thing. I would hope, because we're here to represent our communities. And I will say, out of hundreds of e-mails that I had, there was only one that I saw that was from a veteran asking us to ban THC. And we all got that letter on our desks today.

One thing that has me very concerned—when we're talking about supporting our veterans, a lot of you walk around calling yourself patriots. And you wear the pin on your chest to represent the very free country that we live in that we're afforded the privileges of because we have sacrificed. Again, those of us that have chosen to wear the uniform have done so with the inherent knowledge that we are giving up our lives for our freedoms—the acceptance that we are sacrificing our lives for our freedom. Combat veterans message me and call me every day because I represent Military City, USA—San Antonio, Bexar County, home of Lackland Air Force Base. I represent veterans who have come here day in and day out advocating for legalization and for assistance. Day in and day out they come, and they're given a shell game of opportunity—a bait and switch, if you will. A claim that we're going to have assistance. There's going to be help. We're going to have relief, and we're working real hard for you. However, we contradict that by now creating further legal ramifications for a veteran who is going to choose something other than opioids and pharmaceuticals to quiet the nightmares of what they've had to see in thereafter. I know it's funny to some folks. I know this sounds political to some of you, but we have a responsibility. Our responsibility is to make sure that we have options available to heal all of our community that is suffering from mental health. We sat here, and we've talked about our homeless crisis geared in mental health issues. We've talked about the juvenile justice system geared in mental health issues—which now we are further criminalizing. With this amendment and with this ban, it's guaranteeing that all of your children who come in contact with anything that has a THC label are now going to be criminalized—our tío, your tía, those veterans that are out at Blue Skies of Texas, a retirement home in Bexar County. Retirees who, back when I used to serve as their bartender during their birthdays and anniversaries, some of them actually were members of the Great Escape. For those of you who are younger, the Great Escape is when soldiers who were POWs dug a tunnel out from their POW prison camp out to freedom from the Nazis. These were veterans who would beg for the opportunity to have access to cannabis, to THC, and to other things other than opioids and narcotics to heal their ills. These aren't your Cheech and Chong hippies, as one of our colleagues alluded to earlier. These are people who have really sacrificed life and limb for

their country, one of them being my husband, Ramon Salcedo, who has been shot by the Taliban. This month, while we were here arguing about things, my husband has had to deal with the fourteenth anniversary of him bleeding out on a mountain top—bleeding out, eleven blood transfusions, narcotics that you can't even pronounce, darkness that none of you will ever understand.

While we sit here celebrating our patriotism, having fun, and making snide remarks and comments, I want you all to remember that my sole purpose is to be the messenger. My sole purpose is to be the voice of those veterans and the people who aren't here to advocate for themselves because they lost the battle. We've talked about bail reform. We're further criminalizing our community. We've talked about our law enforcement not having enough funds to operate. We're further exacerbating that issue because now they're going to have to chase after every corner store doobie in every kid's pocket. We talk about border security and the cartels. Well, guess what you do when you make something illegal? You drive us right back into the hands of the cartels. So everything that we're doing here sounds very contradicting to me. And I understand y'all have been in politics way longer than I have. This is my second session—first and only woman veteran to ever have served in this body. Representation matters.

REYNOLDS: I want to thank you for your service. Thank you for being a patriot, for putting your life on the line for our country, and serving with distinction. Thank you for bringing that real-world experience to the Texas House. You said you represent many veterans—the home of the largest number of veterans in the state. You represent that community. Correct?

J. GARCIA: Yes. Military City, USA.

REYNOLDS: Military City, USA in San Antonio. Bexar County, correct?

J. GARCIA: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Based on your communication with your constituents, your fellow veterans, is it true that they depend on these THC hemp products?

J. GARCIA: Absolutely.

REYNOLDS: Is it true that many of these veterans, these soldiers, these men and women who have served our country, these people suffer from PTSD? Is that correct?

J. GARCIA: Absolutely. And many other ailments as well. A lot of them physical, but many more mental that you can't see.

REYNOLDS: And instead of being addicted to prescription drugs that have many harmful side effects, many of these veterans have chosen to use these THC hemp products to deal with those ailments. Is that correct?

J. GARCIA: That is absolutely correct.

REYNOLDS: And isn't it also true that veterans suffer from a disproportionately high rate of suicide? Is that not correct?

J. GARCIA: Yes, they do. Twenty-two a day. It's a number that we all know well.

REYNOLDS: Every single day. Twenty-two a day.

J. GARCIA: Every single day, and that number goes up many times.

REYNOLDS: Isn't it also true that many of these veterans use these THC products and hemp-derived products to cope? To keep from committing suicide?

J. GARCIA: Absolutely. They just want to feel okay. Okay. Think about that. When we think about navigation of life, remember that outside of that uniform we're a totally different human being that a lot of us don't even recognize. A lot of us are expected to carry on our regular duties every day as a regular citizen, not knowing the reflection of the memories of what we've had to do in the name of freedom for our country while being further criminalized for a choice that we hope to make for ourselves. Because a lot of times we're given prescription narcotics. We're given prescription pharmaceuticals, prescription opioids, prescription psychotropic medications. That doesn't translate outside of the military realm. I'm one of those people that suffered severely with my post-traumatic stress disorder after serving as an advisor to the Iraqi military. Upon my return to the United States and to my family, I didn't recognize what safety meant anymore because I over-prepared to die. Every day was like imminent threat, imminent death. I call it suicide by proxy. Suicide by proxy is what we experience when we don't have the courage, so to speak, to kill ourselves because we know people depend on us. But we pray every day that the grim reaper takes us.

REYNOLDS: Veterans are fighting for our freedoms, but we're taking away those freedoms by taking away their ability to choose hemp products. Correct?

J. GARCIA: Yes, we are. It's a dangerous precedent.

KING: **CSSB 3** came as a counteroption to an outright ban. Some of you are for a ban—many of you aren't. That's the reason we have a choice. How you vote on this amendment is completely up to you. I will be voting no on the amendment. The reason is I read about the 1920s, and I don't think Prohibition worked in the 1920s. I don't think it's going to work in the 2020s. I also respect the members of the State Affairs Committee, the staff, the speaker, the countless hours that went into an alternative bill. I'm going to support my bill. I'll leave the Oliverson amendment to the will of the house. I'll be voting no, but it is to the will of the house.

OLIVERSON: Thank you, members. I move adoption.

[Amendment No. 2, as amended, was adopted by Record No. 3191.]

KING: I move passage.

[**CSSB 3**, as amended, was passed to third reading by Record No. 3192.]