
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

URGING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS TO
BE EDUCATED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF HEAVY
BACKPACKS AND TO TAKE PROACTIVE MEASURES TO AVOID INJURY.

1 WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are increasingly
2 causing back pain and spinal strain to students across the
3 nation; and
4

5 WHEREAS, because spinal ligaments and muscles are not fully
6 developed until after the age of sixteen, overweight backpacks
7 are a source of repeated low-level stress that may result in
8 chronic neck, shoulder, or back pain in children; and
9

10 WHEREAS, according to the United States Consumer Product
11 Safety Commission, more than seven thousand emergency room
12 visits each year are due to backpack-related injuries; and
13

14 WHEREAS, studies show that heavy loads carried on the back
15 have the potential to damage the soft tissues of the shoulder,
16 causing microstructural damage to the nerves and damage to
17 internal organs; and
18

19 WHEREAS, studies show an increase in curvatures of the
20 spine and compressed intervertebral height when backpacks exceed
21 ten percent of a child's body weight; and
22

23 WHEREAS, the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study shows back
24 pain and musculoskeletal disorders as the leading causes of
25 disability worldwide; and
26

27 WHEREAS, children's textbooks are much heavier now than
28 they were in the past, and students also often carry computers,
29 cell phones, water bottles, athletic shoes, band instruments,



1 and other equipment considered essential to have readily
2 available; and

3
4 WHEREAS, studies show that more than ninety percent of
5 students carry backpacks that weigh as much as twenty-five
6 percent of the child's body weight; and

7
8 WHEREAS, backpacks often are not worn correctly but are
9 frequently slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang
10 significantly below the waistline, increasing the weight on the
11 shoulders and making the child lean forward when walking or
12 stoop forward when standing to compensate for the weight; now,
13 therefore,

14
15 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-ninth
16 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, the
17 House of Representatives concurring, that all school
18 administrators, teachers, parents, and students are strongly
19 urged to be educated about the potential health impacts of heavy
20 backpacks and to take proactive measures to avoid injury; and

21
22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools are urged to work with
23 their parent-teacher associations to assess the extent to which
24 students use overweight backpacks and to promote innovative
25 strategies to lessen the need to take all school materials and
26 books back and forth each day; and

27
28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools are urged to consider
29 the following when developing their backpack education talking
30 points:

- 31
- 32 (1) Encourage children to use backpacks that weigh no more
- 33 than a maximum of ten percent of the child's body
- 34 weight;
- 35
- 36 (2) Encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with
- 37 individualized compartments to efficiently hold books
- 38 and equipment;
- 39
- 40 (3) Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps and
- 41 not sling their backpacks over one shoulder;



- 1 (4) Encourage the use of backpacks with wide, padded
2 adjustable straps that fit a child's body;
3
- 4 (5) Encourage leaving the heaviest books at school and
5 using handouts or workbooks for homework assignments;
6
- 7 (6) Consider increased use of electronic textbooks as
8 federal and state funding becomes available; and
9
- 10 (7) Consider integrated in-class education about backpack
11 weight, for example, by using a hanging scale in the
12 classroom to enable students to weigh backpacks and
13 track the related data to determine ways to lighten
14 loads; and
15

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
17 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
18 Board of Education, the Superintendent of Education, the
19 Director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, and
20 the Executive Director of the Hawaii State Public Charter School
21 Commission.

