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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO STUDY SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELT  
POLICIES AND COMPILE DATA RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SAFETY AND  
TO REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS.

1           WHEREAS, federal and state laws require certain motor  
2 vehicle drivers and passengers to use seat belts because seat  
3 belts provide a measure of protection during accidents; and  
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5           WHEREAS, passenger cars, light trucks, and vans are  
6 required under federal law to have seat belts at all designated  
7 seating positions; and  
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9           WHEREAS, neither federal nor Hawaii law requires seat belts  
10 on school buses that have a gross vehicle weight rating of more  
11 than ten thousand pounds, which is the standard weight of a  
12 large school bus; and  
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14           WHEREAS, despite increased federal standards for school bus  
15 passenger safety and crash protection, there are still thousands  
16 of injuries to children throughout the country each year due to  
17 school bus accidents; and  
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19           WHEREAS, children suffer both minor and serious injuries to  
20 their head, neck, back, and stomach when striking the roof,  
21 windows, seat backs, and other school bus passengers during  
22 crashes; and  
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24           WHEREAS, the recent public school bus accident on April 3,  
25 involving the Kahuku High School girls water polo team, resulted  
26 in twenty-seven people being treated for cuts and bruises, and  
27 begs the question as to whether seat belts would have kept these  
28 students safer; and  
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30           WHEREAS, opponents of seat belts on large school buses  
31 argue that strong, well-padded, energy absorbing seats and

1 higher seat backs compartmentalize passengers during a crash,  
2 thereby providing adequate safety; and  
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4 WHEREAS, a comprehensive, in-depth study in 1989 by the  
5 Transportation Research Board found that seat belts provide  
6 additional crash protection on compartmentalized school buses;  
7 and  
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9 WHEREAS, in addition, a National Highway Traffic Safety  
10 Administration study found that approximately one-third of the  
11 fatal crashes between 1977 and 1992 were non-frontal crashes  
12 from which compartmentalization is not designed to protect; and  
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14 WHEREAS, most school bus fatalities occur in rollovers; and  
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16 WHEREAS, crash test and case study data indicate that seat  
17 belts provide improved crash protection and are especially  
18 beneficial in side-impact and rollover school bus accidents; and  
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20 WHEREAS, seat belts also reduce other types of injuries by  
21 restraining children who may otherwise be out of their seats,  
22 thereby improving passenger behavior and reducing distractions  
23 to school bus drivers; and  
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25 WHEREAS, California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, and  
26 New York require school buses to meet a higher safety standard  
27 than established under federal law; now, therefore,  
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29 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
30 Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular  
31 Session of 2008, the Senate concurring, that the Board of  
32 Education is requested to:  
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34 (1) Compile and analyze data on all school bus accidents  
35 in the State in the past five years, including but not  
36 limited to injuries sustained and costs to the  
37 Department of Education; and  
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39 (2) Review and analyze the Department of Education's  
40 current policy toward seat belt use on school buses;  
41 and  
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43 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education is  
44 requested to submit a report of findings and recommendations

1 regarding school bus safety, including issues related to seat  
2 belt use and any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no  
3 later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular  
4 Session of 2009; and

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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
7 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to Chairperson of the Board  
8 of Education and the Superintendent of Education.