
HOUSE 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
32 higher seat backs compartmentalize passengers during a crash,
33 thereby providing adequate safety; and

1 WHEREAS, a comprehensive, in-depth study in 1989 by the
2 Transportation Research Board found that seat belts provide
3 additional crash protection on compartmentalized school buses;
4 and

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6 WHEREAS, in addition, a National Highway Traffic Safety
7 Administration study found that approximately one-third of the
8 fatal crashes between 1977 and 1992 were non-frontal crashes
9 from which compartmentalization is not designed to protect; and

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11 WHEREAS, most school bus fatalities occur in rollovers; and

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13 WHEREAS, crash test and case study data indicate that seat
14 belts provide improved crash protection and are especially
15 beneficial in side-impact and rollover school bus accidents; and

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17 WHEREAS, seat belts also reduce other types of injuries by
18 restraining children who may otherwise be out of their seats,
19 thereby improving passenger behavior and reducing distractions
20 to school bus drivers; and

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22 WHEREAS, California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, and
23 New York require school buses to meet a higher safety standard
24 than established under federal law; now, therefore,

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26 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
27 Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
28 Session of 2008, that the Board of Education is requested to:

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30 (1) Compile and analyze data on all school bus accidents
31 in the State in the past five years, including but not
32 limited to injuries sustained and costs to the
33 Department of Education; and
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35 (2) Review and analyze the Department of Education's
36 current policy toward seat belt use on school buses;
37 and

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39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education is
40 requested to submit a report of findings and recommendations
41 regarding school bus safety, including issues related to seat
42 belt use and any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no
43 later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular
44 Session of 2009; and

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
2 Resolution be transmitted to Chairperson of the Board of
3 Education and the Superintendent of Education.