
HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

1 WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are causing an
2 increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain for students
3 across the nation; and
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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
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10 WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety
11 Commission, more than seven thousand emergency room visits each
12 year are due to backpack-related injuries; and
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14 WHEREAS, in 2010 alone, physicians' offices, clinics, and
15 hospital emergency rooms treated nearly twenty-eight thousand
16 strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks;
17 and
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19 WHEREAS, studies show that heavy loads carried on the back
20 have the potential to damage the soft tissues of the shoulder,
21 causing microstructural damage to the nerves and damage to
22 internal organs; and
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24 WHEREAS, studies show an increase in curvatures of the
25 spine and compressed intervertebral height when backpacks exceed
26 ten per cent of a child's body weight; and
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28 WHEREAS, the Global Burden of Disease Study of 2010 shows
29 back pain and musculoskeletal disorders as the leading causes of
30 disability worldwide; and



1 WHEREAS, children's textbooks are much heavier now than
2 many years ago, and in addition to textbooks, students often
3 carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band
4 instruments, and other equipment considered essential to have
5 readily available; and

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7 WHEREAS, more than ninety per cent of students carry
8 backpacks that studies show weigh as much as twenty-five per
9 cent of the child's body weight; and

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

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18 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
19 Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
20 of 2017, that we strongly urge all school administrators,
21 teachers, parents, and students to be educated about the
22 potential health impact of heavy backpacks and to take proactive
23 measures to avoid injury; and

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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools should work with their
26 parent-teacher associations to assess the extent to which
27 students use overweight backpacks and to promote innovative
28 homework strategies, lessening the need to take all school
29 materials and books back and forth each day; and

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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools should consider the
32 following points when developing their backpack education
33 talking points:

- 34
35 (1) Encourage children to use backpacks that weigh no more
36 than a maximum of ten per cent of the child's body
37 weight;
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39 (2) Encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with
40 individualized compartments to efficiently hold books
41 and equipment;



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- 1 (3) Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps and
- 2 not sling the backpack over one shoulder;
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- 4 (4) Encourage the use of wide, padded adjustable straps to
- 5 fit a child's body;
- 6
- 7 (5) Encourage leaving the heaviest books at school and the
- 8 use of handouts or workbooks for homework assignments;
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- 10 (6) Consider increased usage of e-textbooks as federal and
- 11 state funding becomes available; and
- 12
- 13 (7) Consider integrated education about backpacks by using
- 14 a hanging scale in the classroom, allowing students to
- 15 weigh backpacks, enter the results into a graph to
- 16 track the weights, and look at the data to determine
- 17 what can be done to lighten loads; and
- 18

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 20 Resolution be transmitted to the Superintendent of Education,
 21 the Chairperson of the Board of Education, the Director of the
 22 Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, and the Executive
 23 Director of the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission.
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OFFERED BY: Staker

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