

1 SJR8  
2 181604-1  
3 By Senators Dial and Whatley  
4 RFD: Rules  
5 First Read: 07-FEB-17

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

12  
13 WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are causing an  
14 increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain for students  
15 across the nation; and

16 WHEREAS, because spinal ligaments and muscles are  
17 not fully developed until after age 16, overweight backpacks  
18 are a source of repeated low-level stress that may result in  
19 chronic neck, shoulder, or back pain in children; and

20 WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Consumer Product  
21 Safety Commission, more than 7,000 emergency room visits each  
22 year are due to backpack-related injuries and, in 2010 alone,  
23 physicians' offices, clinics, and hospital emergency rooms  
24 treated nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations, and  
25 fractures from backpacks; and

26 WHEREAS, studies have shown that heavy loads carried  
27 on the back have the potential to damage the soft tissues of

1 the shoulder, causing microstructural damage to the nerves and  
2 damage to internal organs; and

3 WHEREAS, studies have shown an increase in  
4 curvatures of the spine and compressed intervertebral height  
5 when backpacks exceed 10 percent of a child's body weight; and

6 WHEREAS, the Global Burden of Disease Study of 2010  
7 showed back pain as the number one cause of disability  
8 worldwide and musculoskeletal disorders as the second cause;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, children's textbooks are much heavier now  
11 than many years ago, and in addition to textbooks, students  
12 often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running  
13 shoes, band instruments, and other equipment considered  
14 essential to have readily available; and

15 WHEREAS, more than 90 percent of students carry  
16 backpacks, which in studies have been found to weigh as much  
17 as 25 percent of the child's body weight; and

18 WHEREAS, backpacks are often not worn correctly,  
19 often slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly  
20 below the waistline, increasing the weight on the shoulders  
21 and making the child lean forward when walking or stoop  
22 forward when standing to compensate for the weight; now  
23 therefore,

24 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH  
25 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That we strongly recommend that all  
26 school administrators, teachers, parents, and students be

1 educated about the potential health impact of heavy backpacks  
2 and take proactive measures to avoid injury.

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That schools should work  
4 with their parent teacher organizations to assess the extent  
5 to which students use overweight backpacks and to promote  
6 innovative homework strategies, lessening the need to take all  
7 school materials and books back and forth each day.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That schools should consider  
9 the following points when developing their backpack education  
10 talking points:

11 (1) Backpacks should weigh no more than a maximum of  
12 10 percent of a child's body weight.

13 (2) Encourage ergonomic backpacks with  
14 individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and  
15 equipment.

16 (3) Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps  
17 and not sling the backpack over one shoulder.

18 (4) Encourage wide, padded adjustable straps that  
19 fit a child's body.

20 (5) Encourage the heaviest books be left at school  
21 and handouts or workbooks be used for homework assignments.

22 (6) Schools should consider moving toward  
23 e-textbooks as federal and state funding becomes available.

24 (7) Schools should consider integrated education  
25 about backpacks by using a hanging scale in the classroom,  
26 allowing students to weigh their backpack and enter the  
27 results into a graph that would track the weights, and then

1 look at the data to determine what may be done to lighten  
2 loads.

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of  
4 this resolution be prepared and presented to the State  
5 Superintendent of Education and the members of the State Board  
6 of Education.