

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 79

BY REPRESENTATIVE AMEDEE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request each public school governing authority to take certain actions relative to helping students avoid injury due to the use of heavy backpacks.

WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are causing an increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain in students in elementary and secondary schools across the nation; and

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

WHEREAS, reviews of data have revealed more than seven thousand emergency room visits and more than twenty-eight thousand doctor's office visits per year by children for backpack-related injuries; and

WHEREAS, studies of the effects on children of carrying heavy backpacks have shown that heavy loads carried on the back have the potential to compress intervertebral disc height and damage the soft tissues of the shoulder causing microstructural damage to the nerves; and

WHEREAS, students' textbooks are much heavier now than many years ago, and in addition to textbooks, students often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band instruments, and other equipment; and

WHEREAS, more than ninety percent of children carry a school backpack, which studies have found can weigh as much as twenty-five percent of the child's body weight; and

WHEREAS, backpacks are often not worn correctly and are frequently slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly below the waistline, increasing the weight on

the shoulders and causing the child to lean forward when walking or standing to compensate for the weight; and

WHEREAS, rolling backpacks remove the weight from a child's back but are sometimes not allowed in schools due to a concern over being a trip hazard in the hallways or because of the difficulty of carrying them up and down stairways.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request each public school governing authority to take the following actions to help students avoid injury due to the use of heavy backpacks:

(1) Discourage students from carrying a backpack that weighs more than ten percent of the student's body weight.

(2) Encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment.

(3) Encourage students to wear both shoulder straps and not sling a backpack over one shoulder.

(4) Encourage the use of wide, padded, adjustable backpack straps that fit the student's body.

(5) Encourage students to leave the heaviest books at school and urge teachers to give handouts or workbooks that can be used for homework assignments.

(6) Encourage schools to make electronic versions of textbooks available as federal and state funding for that purpose becomes available.

(7) Offer students integrated education about backpacks by using a hanging scale in the classroom to allow students to weigh their backpacks and enter the weight into a graph that would track the weights and use the data to determine whether a student's backpack is too heavy and provide information about ways to lighten the weight of a backpack.

(8) Encourage school administrators to work with parent-teacher organizations to assess the extent to which their students use overweight backpacks and to promote innovative homework strategies that lessen the need for students to take school materials and books from school to home each day.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, who shall disseminate a copy

to each city, parish, or other local public school board, and to the state superintendent of education, who shall disseminate a copy to the governing authority of each charter school.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE