

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 4

2 **53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2018**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

11 ENCOURAGING SCHOOLS AND PARENTS TO RECOGNIZE AND REDUCE THE  
12 HEALTH RISKS TO CHILDREN FROM CARRYING OVERWEIGHT BACKPACKS.

13  
14 WHEREAS, overweight backpacks carried in schools are  
15 causing increasing problems of back pain and spinal strain for  
16 students across the nation; and

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

21 WHEREAS, according to the United States consumer product  
22 safety commission, more than seven thousand emergency room  
23 visits each year are due to backpack-related injuries, and in  
24 2010 alone, physicians' offices and clinics and hospital  
25 emergency rooms treated nearly twenty-eight thousand strains,

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1 sprains, dislocations and fractures from backpacks; and

2 WHEREAS, studies have shown heavy loads carried on the  
3 back have the potential to damage the soft tissues of the  
4 shoulder, causing microstructural damage to the nerves and  
5 damage to internal organs; and

6 WHEREAS, the global burden of disease study of 2010 showed  
7 back pain as the number-one cause of disability worldwide and  
8 musculoskeletal disorders as the second-highest cause; and

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

14 WHEREAS, more than ninety percent of students carry  
15 backpacks, which in studies have been found to weigh as much as  
16 twenty-five percent of the child's body weight; and

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

22 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
23 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that school administrators, teachers,  
24 parents and students be educated about the potential health  
25 impact of heavy backpacks and be requested to take proactive

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1 measures to avoid injury; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools be requested to work  
3 with their respective parent-teacher associations to assess the  
4 extent to which students use overweight backpacks and to  
5 promote innovative homework strategies that lessen the need to  
6 take school materials and books home each day; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools be requested to  
8 consider that backpacks should weigh no more than a maximum of  
9 ten percent of a child's body weight, have individualized  
10 compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment and have  
11 wide, padded and adjustable straps to fit the child's body;  
12 that children should wear both shoulder straps and not sling  
13 the backpack over one shoulder; and that the heaviest books  
14 should be left at school; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools be requested to  
16 consider moving toward e-textbooks as federal and state funding  
17 become available; use handouts or workbooks for homework  
18 assignments; and consider integrated education about backpacks  
19 by using a hanging scale in the classroom that allows students  
20 to weigh backpacks and enter the results into a graph that  
21 tracks the backpack weight and that students and schools review  
22 the data to determine what can be done to lighten loads; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
24 transmitted to the director and chair of the legislative  
25 education study committee, the chair of the legislative health

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1 and human services committee and the secretary of public  
2 education for distribution to parent-teacher associations,  
3 local superintendents and charter school head administrators.

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