HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

WHEREAS, overloaded school backpacks are increasingly causing back pain and spinal strain to students across the nation; and

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

WHEREAS, according to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than seven thousand emergency room visits each year are due to backpack-related injuries; and

WHEREAS, studies show that heavy loads carried on the back have the potential to damage the soft tissues of the shoulder, causing microstructural damage to the nerves and damage to internal organs; and

WHEREAS, studies show an increase in curvatures of the spine and compressed intervertebral height when backpacks exceed ten percent of a child's body weight; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study shows back pain and musculoskeletal disorders as the leading causes of disability worldwide; and

WHEREAS, children's textbooks are much heavier now than they were in the past, and students also often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, athletic shoes, band instruments, and other equipment considered essential to have readily available; and
WHEREAS, studies show that more than ninety percent of students carry backpacks that weigh as much as twenty-five percent of the child's body weight; and

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

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, that all school administrators, teachers, parents, and students are strongly urged to be educated about the potential health impacts of heavy backpacks and to take proactive measures to avoid injury; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Education is urged to develop policies and procedures to allow licensed chiropractors to conduct interval scoliosis examinations on children in schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools are urged to work with their parent-teacher associations to assess the extent to which students use overweight backpacks and to promote innovative strategies to lessen the need to take all school materials and books back and forth each day; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that schools are urged to consider the following when developing their backpack education talking points:

(1) Encourage children to use backpacks that weigh no more than a maximum of ten percent of the child's body weight;

(2) Encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment;
(3) Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps and not sling their backpacks over one shoulder;

(4) Encourage the use of backpacks with wide, padded adjustable straps that fit a child's body;

(5) Encourage leaving the heaviest books at school and using handouts or workbooks for homework assignments;

(6) Consider increased use of electronic textbooks as federal and state funding becomes available; and

(7) Consider integrated in-class education about backpack weight, for example, by using a hanging scale in the classroom to enable students to weigh backpacks and track the related data to determine ways to lighten loads; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Education, the Director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, and the Executive Director of the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission.

OFFERED BY:

[Signatures]

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