

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 38

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

216th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 27, 2014

Sponsored by:
Senator PETER J. BARNES, III
District 18 (Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Urges school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to be better educated about potential health impacts of heavy backpacks and take proactive measures to avoid injury.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **A SENATE RESOLUTION** urging school administrators, teachers,
2 parents, and students to be better educated about the potential
3 health impact of heavy backpacks and to take proactive measures
4 to avoid injury.

5
6 **WHEREAS**, Backpacks of elementary and secondary school students
7 often contain textbooks, binders, calculators, personal computers,
8 lunches, a change of clothing, sports equipment, and more; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Elementary and secondary school students are carrying
10 backpacks weighing as much as 40 pounds; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Overloaded school backpacks are causing an increasing
12 problem of back pain and spinal strain for students; and

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

17 **WHEREAS**, According to the United States Consumer Product Safety
18 Commission, over 7,000 emergency room visits each year are due
19 to backpack-related injuries. In 2010 alone, physicians' offices,
20 clinics, and hospital emergency rooms treated nearly 28,000 strains,
21 sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks; and

22 **WHEREAS**, Studies have shown that heavy loads carried on the back
23 have the potential to damage the soft tissues of the shoulder,
24 causing microstructural damage to the nerves and damage to
25 internal organs; and

26 **WHEREAS**, Backpacks are often not worn correctly, often slung over
27 one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly below a student's
28 waistline, increasing the weight on the shoulders and making the
29 child lean forward when walking or stoop forward when standing to
30 compensate for the weight; and

31 **WHEREAS**, The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
32 recommends that a child's backpack should weigh no more than 15
33 to 20 percent of the child's body weight, depending on the child's
34 body strength and fitness; and

35 **WHEREAS**, In order to promote backpack safety, schools should
36 consider measures such as: switching to electronic textbooks;
37 encouraging that the heaviest textbooks be left at school and
38 handouts or workbooks be used for homework assignments;
39 encouraging the use of ergonomic backpacks; and encouraging the
40 use of wide, padded adjustable straps to fit a child's body; now,
41 therefore,

42
43 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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45 1. School administrators, teachers, parents, and students are
46 strongly urged to be better educated about the potential health
47 impact of heavy backpacks and to take proactive measures to avoid
48 student injury.

