

Enrolled

Senate Joint Resolution 6

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Whereas overloaded school backpacks are causing an increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain for students across the nation; and

Whereas because spinal ligaments and muscles are not fully developed until after a person reaches 16 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 according to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 7,000 emergency room visits each year are due to backpack-related injuries, and, in 2010 alone, physicians' offices, clinics and hospital emergency rooms treated nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations and fractures related to backpacks; and

Whereas studies have shown that heavy loads carried on the back have the potential to injure the soft tissues of the shoulder, cause microstructural damage to nerves and harm internal organs; and

Whereas studies have shown that increased curvature of the spine and compressed intervertebral height occur when children wear backpacks that exceed 10 percent of their body weight; and

Whereas the Global Burden of Disease Study of 2010 showed back pain as the number one cause of disability worldwide and musculoskeletal disorders as the number two cause; and

Whereas children's textbooks tend to be much heavier now than in the past, and in addition to books, students often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band instruments and other equipment considered essential to have readily available; and

Whereas more than 90 percent of students carry backpacks, which in studies have been found to weigh as much as 25 percent of a child's body weight; and

Whereas backpacks are often worn incorrectly and are slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang significantly below the waistline, increasing the load on the shoulders and causing children to lean forward to compensate for the weight while walking or standing; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the Seventy-ninth Legislative Assembly:

(1) Strongly recommend that all school administrators, teachers, parents and students be educated about the potential health impacts of heavy backpacks and take proactive measures to avoid injuries;

(2) Recommend that licensed medical professionals who are trained in recognizing the indicators of scoliosis conduct school scoliosis examinations;

(3) Recommend that schools work with their Parent Teacher Associations or Parent Teacher Organizations to assess the extent to which students use overloaded backpacks and to promote innovative homework strategies that lessen the need to carry all books and other school materials back and forth between home and school each day;

(4) Recommend that schools consider the following items when developing backpack education talking points:

(a) Schools should inform parents, teachers and students that backpacks should weigh no more than 10 percent of a child's body weight and have wide, padded adjustable straps that fit the child.

(b) Schools should encourage the use of ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to properly distribute the weight of books and equipment.

(c) Parents and teachers should instruct students to wear both shoulder straps and not to sling the backpack over one shoulder.

(d) Schools should encourage teachers to plan homework such that the heaviest books can be left at school and handouts or workbooks can be used for homework assignments.

(e) Schools should employ the use of digital textbooks as federal and state funding becomes available.

(f) Schools should consider integrated education about backpacks that utilizes a scale in the classroom, allowing students to weigh their backpacks, track the results on a graph and examine the data to determine what can be done to lighten loads; and

(5) Direct the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction to communicate to every school district in this state the information regarding backpack safety described in this resolution.

Adopted by Senate February 28, 2017

Lori L. Brocker, Secretary of Senate

Peter Courtney, President of Senate

Adopted by House May 4, 2017

Tina Kotek, Speaker of House