

## Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 86

### RESOLUTION CHAPTER 100

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 86—Relative to heavy school backpacks.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 7, 2014.]

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 86, Hueso. Heavy school backpacks.

This measure would acknowledge the health risks that heavy backpacks pose to schoolchildren and recommend certain measures to be taken in that regard to avoid injury.

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

WHEREAS, Because spinal ligaments and muscles are not fully developed until after 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, Reviews of data have revealed over 7,000 emergency room visits, and over 28,000 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, Pupils' textbooks are much heavier now than many years ago and, in addition to textbooks, pupils often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, running shoes, band instruments, and other equipment considered essential to have readily available; and

WHEREAS, The State Board of Education, pursuant to Assembly Bill 2532 (Chapter 1096 of the Statutes of 2002), adopted maximum weight standards for textbooks, and required textbook publishers to submit lightweight alternatives to print materials; and

WHEREAS, More than 90 percent of children carry a school backpack, which studies have found to weigh as much as 25 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; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring,* That the Legislature strongly recommends that all school administrators, teachers, parents, and school children be educated about the potential health impacts of heavy backpacks and take proactive measures to avoid injury; and be it further

*Resolved,* That schools should work with parent-teacher organizations to assess the extent to which their pupils use overweight backpacks and to promote innovative homework strategies that lessen the need for pupils to take school materials and books from school to home each day; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Legislature urges schools to do the following when developing their guidelines for pupils' use of backpacks:

(a) Discourage pupils from carrying a backpack that weighs more than 10 percent of a pupil's body weight.

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

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

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

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

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

(g) Offer pupils integrated education about backpacks by using a hanging scale in the classroom to allow pupils to weigh their backpacks and enter the weight into a graph that would track the weights and use the data to determine whether a pupil's backpack is too heavy, and provide information about ways to lighten the weight of a backpack; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.