SJR8
181604-2
By Senators Dial and Whatley
RFD: Rules
First Read: 07-FEB-17
ENROLLED, SJR8,

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

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 age 16, 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 U.S. 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 from backpacks; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown 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 have shown an increase in
curvatures of the spine and compressed intervertebral height
when backpacks exceed 10 percent of a child’s 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 second cause; and

WHEREAS, children’s textbooks are much heavier now
than many years ago, and in addition to textbooks, 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 the child’s body weight; and

WHEREAS, backpacks are often not worn correctly,
often 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 LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That we strongly recommend that all
school administrators, teachers, parents, and students be
educated about the potential health impact of heavy backpacks
and take proactive measures to avoid injury.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That schools should work
with their parent teacher organizations to assess the extent
to which students use overweight backpacks and to promote
innovative homework strategies, lessening the need to take all
school materials and books back and forth each day.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That schools should consider
the following points when developing their backpack education
talking points:

(1) Backpacks should weigh no more than a maximum of
10 percent of a child's body weight.

(2) Encourage ergonomic backpacks with
individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and
equipment.

(3) Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps
and not sling the backpack over one shoulder.

(4) Encourage wide, padded adjustable straps that
fit a child's body.

(5) Encourage the heaviest books be left at school
and handouts or workbooks be used for homework assignments.

(6) Schools should consider moving toward
e-textbooks as federal and state funding becomes available.
(7) Schools should consider integrated education about backpacks by using a hanging scale in the classroom, allowing students to weigh their backpack and enter the results into a graph that would track the weights, and then look at the data to determine what may be done to lighten loads.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to the State Superintendent of Education and the members of the State Board of Education.
Kay Ivey
President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

Mac McCann
Speaker of the House of Representatives

SJR8
Senate 09-FEB-17
I hereby certify that the within Senate Joint Resolution originated in and was adopted by the Senate.

Patrick Harris
Secretary

House of Representatives
Adopted: 21-FEB-17

By: Senator Dial

APPROVED 2-28-2017
TIME 9:30 AM

Gulf Bivens
GOVERNOR

Alabama Secretary Of State
Act Num.: 2017-19
Bill Num.: SJR-8
Recvd 02/20/17 02:10pmSLF
REPORT OF RULES COMMITTEE

This resolution having been referred by the House to its standing committee on RULES was acted upon by such committee in session, and returned therefrom to the House with the recommendation that it be adopted.

___________________________ Chairman