

# SENATE RESOLUTION No. 67

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# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

## 218th LEGISLATURE

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INTRODUCED MARCH 12, 2018

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

### **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.

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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,** More than 90 percent of students carry backpacks, which  
10       in studies have been found to weigh as much as 25 percent of the  
11       child's body weight; and

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

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

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

23   **WHEREAS,** Studies have shown an increase in curvatures of the spine  
24       and compressed intervertebral height when backpacks exceed ten  
25       percent of a child's body weight; and

26   **WHEREAS,** The Global Burden of Disease Study of 2010 showed back  
27       pain as the number one cause of disability worldwide and  
28       musculoskeletal disorders as the second cause; and

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

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

41  
42       **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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

**SR67 TURNER**

3

2. Schools are encouraged to work with their parent-teacher associations to assess the extent to which students use overweight backpacks and promote innovative homework strategies that lessen the need to take all school materials and books back and forth each day.

3. Students are encouraged to use ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment and to wear both shoulder straps and not sling the backpack over one shoulder.

12        4. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,  
13        shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the  
14        Commissioner of Education, who shall distribute the resolution to  
15        all school districts in the State.

## STATEMENT

20 This resolution urges school administrators, teachers, parents,  
21 and students to be better educated about the potential health impacts  
22 of heavy backpacks and to take proactive measures to avoid student  
23 injury.

Elementary and secondary school students often carry textbooks, binders, calculators, personal computers, lunches, a change of clothing, sports equipment, and other items for school, all of which cause backpacks to weigh as much as 25 percent of the child's body weight. These overloaded backpacks are causing an increasing problem of back pain and spinal strain for students. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, over 7,000 emergency room visits each year are due to backpack-related injuries. In 2010 alone, physicians' offices, clinics, and hospital emergency rooms treated nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks.

In order to promote backpack safety and lessen back and shoulder injuries, schools should consider measures such as: switching to electronic textbooks; encouraging that the heaviest textbooks be left at school and handouts or workbooks be used for homework assignments; encouraging the use of ergonomic backpacks; and encouraging the use of wide, padded adjustable straps to fit a child's body.