

S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

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2009-2010 Regular Sessions

I N S E N A T E

February 10, 2009

Introduced by Sen. STACHOWSKI -- read twice and ordered printed, and
when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT authorizing the commissioner of the state education department to
conduct a study and report on the adverse health effects of heavy
backpacks and book bags on elementary school children

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEM-
BLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1 Section 1. Legislative findings and purpose. The legislature finds and
2 declares that elementary school children are carrying backpacks and book
3 bags weighing as much as forty pounds. Pediatricians and chiropractors
4 recommend that backpacks and book bags not exceed fifteen percent of a
5 child's body weight. Pediatricians, chiropractors and physical thera-
6 pists are seeing adverse health effects, to wit, an increased number of
7 children with spinal column injuries, back pain, and significant
8 postural changes from overloaded backpacks. In 1999, the United States
9 consumer product safety commission found that more than 3,400 pupils
10 between 5 and 14 years of age sought treatment in hospital emergency
11 rooms for injuries related to backpacks and book bags. The commissioner
12 of the state education department, in conjunction with specialists in
13 orthopedic medicine, shall determine the prevalence of such adverse
14 health effects in New York state elementary school children and report
15 to the governor and the legislature on such findings and determine the
16 feasibility of addressing such adverse health effects.

17 S 2. The commissioner of the state education department is hereby
18 authorized and directed to prepare or have prepared a study of the
19 adverse effects of carrying heavy backpacks and book bags on elementary
20 school students. Such study shall include, but not be limited to, an
21 evaluation of the following issues:

22 1. the prevalence of adverse health effects on New York state elemen-
23 tary school children directly and indirectly attributable to carrying
24 overloaded backpacks and book bags;

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[] is old law to be omitted.

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1 2. the feasibility of addressing such adverse health effects; and
2 3. the commissioner of the state education department's conclusions,
3 recommendations and proposal for implementing such recommendations.

4 S 3. Such study shall be completed within twelve months of the effec-
5 tive date of this act. Upon completion, such study, conclusions, recom-
6 mendations and proposals for implementing such recommendations, shall be
7 transmitted to the director of the division of the budget, the chair of
8 the senate finance committee, the chair of the assembly ways and means
9 committee, the chair of the senate higher education committee and the
10 chair of the assembly higher education committee.

11 S 4. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
12 it shall have become a law.