

February 28, 2019

In regard to my opposition to:

S.B. 874 - AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

S.B. No. 457 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

S.B. No. 738 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Andrea Barber. I have been a resident of Canton, Connecticut since 2005. I have 3 children, ages 11, 9, and 2 ½. My older children are currently in 6th grade and 4th grade at Canton Intermediate School. My youngest will enter Kindergarten in 2021.

I am part of the nearly unanimous opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 among Connecticut's public school parents. I believe that they will harm our communities, our schools, and most importantly, our children.

Residents of Canton enjoy much about our community. One of the primary connections we have to our town is through our schools – Cherry Brook Primary School, Canton Intermediate School, Canton Middle School, and Canton High School. Our children's teachers become part of our family, and stay connected to us long after the school year is over. High school seniors visit their elementary school teachers as part of their graduation festivities. Our community has beloved traditions within our schools that keep our children, our families, and our community close-knit, connected, involved, and grounded. Having our local schools tied so closely to our community identity grounds our children in the best possible start toward becoming adults who care about the community and about each other.

In Canton, we enjoy participation and volunteerism in our school buildings and are actively encouraged to participate in Board of Education meetings. Our voices are listened to. Our voices matter. Our Superintendent (Kevin Case), Assistant Superintendent (Jordan Grossman), our BOE chair (Julie Ausere) know the families they serve and are invested in our community. Our BOE is made up of fellow parents and our neighbors who we trust to manage the large and important undertaking of policies that will affect our children's education. This would be undermined in a regionalized school consisting of sprawling constituents. Our BOE often convenes committees of local stakeholders on matters that affect our children – such as half-day vs. full day kindergarten. These committees research, debate, exchange points of view, and share recommendations that would best serve our community. Residents are encouraged to become a part of the school budget process each year. What is best for our community may not be best for even our closest neighboring towns –Avon,

Simsbury, Unionville, Granby – and this ok because we are autonomous, as are they. In a regional school situation, this would not be possible.

I cannot imagine the sadness and outrage that our children, families, and community would feel if this was lost. Losing our schools to regionalization would be losing a part of our identity, losing our voice, and losing a huge part of what ties us here to Canton. Why stay in this town or state if it does not do what is best for us? If money is more important than community and education?

Based on the research that has already been conducted, regionalization does not work. It did not work in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont and I believe it would fail in Connecticut, at the expense of our children.

We will fight to protect our local schools from forced or coerced regionalization. We want to defeat these bills - SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 - and then vote out the politicians who support them. Instead of constantly cutting from schools and shortchanging our children, it would be refreshing to actually see our elected leaders fight FOR children and families.

Sincerely,

Andrea M. Barber
Canton, CT