

SB738, SB457, SB874
New Canaan & Stamford

Dear Education Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874. These bills that force regionalization of Connecticut public schools will not save money, they will harm school quality, and they will damage the special character of small towns in Connecticut. As a parent of young public school students and an owner of a medium sized pediatric business based primarily in Connecticut I am greatly concerned with the possibility of any of these bills passing.

Regionalizing schools does not necessarily mean a cost savings for the state. The Hartford Foundation studied this very issue and found that districts with 2500-3000 students may be the most cost effective and foster education success. Their findings suggested that especially at-risk communities should not have elementary school enrollment exceed 300 students and high school enrolment should not exceed 500. The literature review suggested that deconsolidation of large school districts be considered as an option for cost savings. In Connecticut, it is estimated that the total savings from the 129 smallest school districts would match the combined equivalent per-pupil savings from the three largest school districts. Consequently, a significant reduction in statewide education costs requires reducing per-pupil spending in urban areas, not just in small rural districts.

Furthermore, the cost of increased transportation costs, renegotiating teacher contracts, increased administrative and support staff, retrofitting school buildings, and attempting to sell school buildings once emptied with no apparent buyers will offset any potential regionalization savings.

Our family moved to our town primarily for the school system and the warm community that is based around our schools. We moved from a larger district where our children had a more difficult time maintaining friends primarily because of the vastness of the district and the lack of community. I am so appreciative of the close connection I feel with their teachers and the administrative staff at the elementary school. The students are exposed to many opportunities both during the school day and on the afternoons and weekends for further learning. The loss of these opportunities simply because of travel distance and size of the student body would be tragic. I think that closing a town's schools can cause a major hole in the fabric of the community.

My business specializes in children with special needs, primarily autism. We work closely with the public school systems in both Fairfield and New Haven Counties. For the people portion of my company, the encounters that I have had with the special education departments and administrators in the smaller districts has been top notch. These individuals care about each child individually and if we start consolidating these districts I worry that what makes these departments special will be lost. As for the economic impact that regionalization will have on my company, we were strongly considering expanding into Hartford County this year but these bills are making me question further expansion into

Connecticut at all. Connecticut already has negative population growth. The passing of any of these bills would only exacerbate this exodus from the state. A smartly run business does not choose to expand in a state where the clientele is becoming scarce. Families with children are our clientele.

I hope that you will oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other effort to force consolidation of Connecticut public schools.

Respectfully Submitted,

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