

Greetings,

I am writing to express my intense opposition to and disdain for the proposed SB 457 or any other contemplated or otherwise yet to be proposed bills that open the door to the forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

My position is one of a parent of public school students and a resident of CT for over 17 years.

Allow me to begin by stating that I simply do not trust you truly have the best interests of the state in mind, but rather, I believe that the backers of these bills are out to serve their own interests and satisfy some form of institutional support that helped them gain their seat in office.

Objectively speaking, I can understand that in some instances, savings could be obtained. However, your need to force the matter via government mandate is not only unnecessary, but is tantamount to an effort to mandate socialism. You have introduced a concept, it has gained notoriety, and it has people thinking.

QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD!!!

There is no logical reason to continue pursuit of such bills any father. You can stop now and allow any school districts that believe they can benefit to collaborate on their own and achieve the same results. Form a commission, be the helper, work with those who want your help and leave the rest of us alone. Further pursuit of these bills means one of several things:

- 1) You are lying about your goal.
- 2) You have ulterior motives that have yet to become clear.
- 3) You simply believe you are smarter than all of us and you know better.
- 4) All of the above.

Let us look at my town, Wilton as an example, here are some VOLUNTARY examples of shared services between the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education, decisions made locally that are yielding results:

- Joint CFO
- Joint Facilities Director
- Police Department School Resource Officers
- Town provided pension administrative services for BOE employees not covered by the state teachers' pension plan
- Town finance staff, in lieu of consultants, currently assisting
- school personal with financial software transitions
- Town IS personnel, in lieu of consultants, assisted with the implementation of the school's new phone system
- Town provided school nurses
- Parks and Recreation managed external school sports fields and facilities
- Solar installations
- Shared property and liability insurance
- Shared medical claims administration
- Shared fuel purchasing

- Shared electricity agreements
- Allow me to switch to some issues with these various insulting bills on the table:

SB 874 has requirements as to when a school district must share a superintendent with another district. Non-compliance results in the loss of aid equal to the cost of the single superintendent. The requirements are: if the municipality has one or two elementary schools or has a population of less than 10,000 or an enrollment of less than 2,000. Perhaps the Governor and his staff, think only small districts have just one or two elementary schools, but we know better, as Wilton has only two elementary schools! Years ago, Wilton understood it was inefficient to have the two, separate side-by-side elementary schools, the Miller School and the Driscoll School. The town combined them into one school not only to reduce costs, but also to ensure equal outcomes. This bill now seeks to financially punish us for that cost effective decision.

HB 7192 requires that WestCOG form a regional assessment division, which will serve Wilton and other communities, including New Milford and Sherman, which are not similar to Wilton. This is being suggested even though a recent study commissioned by WestCOG and funded by the state, determined there weren't worthwhile benefits to a regional assessor. Did anyone on the Governor's staff know about this study when drafting this bill? Assessing one's property value and thus significantly impacting what one pays in property taxes is a critical responsibility within any town. We should be the ones making the decision to maintain local services versus the state forcing our actions.

Practically speaking, combining districts that span large geographical areas creates logistical nightmares. It can be snowing in Norwalk and there can be 6 inches of snow on the ground in North Wilton. What happens then? Does half the district get a snow day? Does everyone? School may as well run year round?

We moved to this state for the culture, the atmosphere and the schools. The horrific decisions made in Hartford in recent years have killed our economy and people are leaving the state in droves because the future is dim. Your planned bills seek to destroy one of the few remaining positive aspects and not only drive out more people but also deter future home buyers. Keep it up and you'll be out of a job too, there will be nobody left to govern.

Look at how many CT school districts have achieved national recognition. These results were achieved by smart, dedicated people working locally, not by the almighty in Hartford. None of your bills even speak to the quality of education. Is that not what we should be focused on?

The concept of democracy dictates that representatives serve the people - not that they try to control the people. Pass any of these or similar bills and you will be responsible for the further degradation of the State of Connecticut. I thank you for allowing me to express my view.

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