



Members of the Education Committee,

We are the co-chairs of the Council of Darien School Parents, the umbrella organization for the Parent-Teacher Organizations of all of Darien Public Schools. We are writing to voice our strong opposition to the forced regionalization measures in SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

We recognize that our town may be 'safe' from the measures suggested in SB 457 because of the size of our district. However, we want to be clear that we oppose the idea of state-mandated regionalization for any and all towns in Connecticut regardless of size. There may be towns and districts in the state that could benefit from sharing resources. We would welcome an opportunity for those districts to determine if they might be able to improve their schools while also cutting costs. However, the idea of forcing regionalization or taking away state funding or grants because a town does not choose to regionalize is punitive and potentially damaging to the quality of our schools.

Our town's best asset is its school system. Simply put, the Darien public schools are excellent. We are proud of the hard work done by Darien's Board of Education, the District Administration and our outstanding teachers and staff. The schools are the reason the majority of residents move to Darien. These bills have the potential to change our school system in such a way that it would be hard to attract new residents to our town. In fact, some residents have suggested it would motivate them to move away, yet they fear they would struggle to sell their homes. Further, we have not seen any evidence that would suggest any cost savings to Darien. In short, we have seen nothing to suggest that our town would benefit from this at all.

We have heard from some legislators that these bills are being proposed as a way to initiate a conversation about change. But we challenge that approach to starting a conversation.

- To have a conversation about education, you should start with how it would benefit the children. So far there has been little discussion of how this benefits the students; improved student outcomes has barely been mentioned at all.

- To have a conversation about education, you need to include the educators and education experts. To our knowledge, no one reached out to any of our town officials, Board of Education, or school administrators to help inform these proposals.
- To have a conversation about education, you need to include your constituents: the parents and the taxpayers. They, too, have been left out of the conversation.

In our role, we work closely with the PTOs and other parent groups in Darien. We have found no support whatsoever for forced regionalization from parents in Darien. This position crosses party lines: there is massive opposition to the bills from both Darien Republicans as well as the majority of Darien Democrats. The students of Darien are our number one priority. As such, we want to reiterate that one of our biggest concerns about these bills is that they do not prioritize the children. We urge you to take these bills off the table until more research is conducted and productive discussions with all stakeholders have occurred.

Respectfully,  
Julie Best and Sara Parent  
Co-Chairs, Council of Darien School Parents  
Darien, CT