

To whom it may concern,

I am a 13 year resident of Weston, CT with three children and I strongly oppose the proposed school regionalization bills being proposed here in our state under SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874. I was relocated to Connecticut by UBS in 2006 and my wife and I specifically choose Weston so that my children could experience a first-rate education, all while accepting a higher tax burden than neighboring towns due to Weston's rural, low commercial tax revenue base. In 2010, we had to short-sell our house, taking a significant loss due to the financial crisis, but we did everything we could to ensure our children could stay in Weston and their respective schools. To add insult to injury, UBS relocated me (and most everyone else in Stamford) back to the city. Facing an awful 3.5+ hour round trip commute I would never had stayed in this town or Connecticut if it were not for the stellar schools and the amazing people with whom I have the fortune to call neighbor.

According to U.S. News and World Report, our state ranks as follows: 14th in Education, 41st in Fiscal Stability, and 43rd in Economy. On a per capita basis, we have the 2nd highest burden of any state. I have sadly watched our state become saddled with underfunded pension liability and budget issues over the past decade while great businesses like UBS, RBS and GE and others leave due to the unfriendly business environment the state has created. The associated population statistics paint a similarly grim picture. In short, we have an economic and population crisis which continues to move in the wrong direction.

The legislation under consideration is a failed effort to masquerade the hard issues at hand around our economy and challenged fiscal system. Our sister state, Rhode Island, serves as a prime example of how an active Governor and legislation has tackled similar problems. This school regionalization effort is an effort by this newly elected state government to cripple smaller towns and diminish one more attractive and viable assets of CT, a quality public education system. In none of these proposals are there any benefits to the quality of education. You can be assured that if regionalization takes hold here in Connecticut that there will be a nominal change in our fiscal stability, but our educational rankings will drop like a stone. This hurts the entire state educationally and economically.

Accordingly, research around regionalization is not favorable as evidenced by this Seton Hall University Report - <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2894&context=dissertations>. The fact patterns of other states and regionalization are simply not compelling.

I urge you to stand up and support our school systems. Please do not use our local towns as another version of a "piggybank" to solve the systemic issues of the state. We should be investing to improve our education system; not looking at it as "expense valve" because our politicians cannot find ways to attract thriving businesses to our state and tackle the pension liability issues.

This regionalization effort will result in CT dropping in the national rankings for education while only modestly and temporarily improve our financial stability. Regionalization will erode Connecticut's already bleak larger economic picture and tax base. The same entrepreneurs and businessmen and women who make the decisions to move their businesses here also have children in schools and will surely think twice about investing in Connecticut for themselves and their employees. Please oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools, as this will severely cripple our precious and sacred educational system.

Sincerely,

Frank Bigelow

54 Kellogg Hill Rd

Weston CT