

Objection to PSB-738 and PSB-457

From:
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To:
State of CT General Assembly

As a 23-year resident of Wilton, I am writing to register my firm objection to school district consolidation. My objection rests on many grounds.

First, the bulk of a school budget goes to teacher salaries, and is governed by individual teacher salary and student-teacher ratio, determining class size. I see no economies of scale here, except by increasing class sizes and thereby unarguably decreasing quality of education. In fact, the costs of consolidation -- such as longer bus routes -- may actually be a deterrent to cost efficiency.

Second, I see no proof that governmental action on the state level delivers better results than local government. As a commuter to New York who rides Metro North, I find the state Department of Transportation management of the railroad to be a disaster of mismanagement. One would describe the state's performance here with the much used colloquial term "train wreck," if that weren't such an gruesome expression in this specific case. In addition, the state's management of taxation and attractiveness to business has been similarly underwhelming.

Third, the quality of the schools, especially in the smaller towns of Fairfield County, is the main draw and most important reason we choose to move and settle here. In Wilton, our schools are by far the most significant draw and, for many of us, the only reason we're here. Strip that from us, and we'll be gone. Gone, to use another colloquial expression, "in a New York minute." And with us will go a substantial proportion of the state's highest income, highest tax-paying population.

Finally, and more sentimentally, on the subject of these smaller town schools, it is not just their excellence but the sense of community they provide that keeps us here. The life of Wilton, for many of the us, revolves around bonds formed through the schools. I have 3 children in their mid-to-late 20s, who each went away to college and no longer live here, but for whom Wilton friendships represent some of their live's deepest friendships. I'm not saying this couldn't happen in a regional district, but there is something special about a smaller town. These who want to live in a larger town or city can opt to do that, but for those of us in towns like Wilton, there's something special about smallness. Its loss would be a large one.

For all these reasons, I urge you, and I'll call on my final colloquial expression, to "stop the madness."

Cordially,
Andrew Bohjalian