

February 26, 2019

Dear Sirs,

I have been a Weston CT resident for 16 year, have 5 children, 2 of which are still in the Weston school system. I want to go on record that I vehemently opposed SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Weston is a quaint little town, in the traditional Normal Rockwell sense. We have great outdoor spaces to hike and enjoy nature, places for our children to play, a small town center, and a school district of high quality and caring. The school system is the reason my wife and I moved from NY to CT.

There are numerous studies (NY, Maine and VT) that specifically show that regionalization DOES NOT save money. Why should fiscally responsible towns such as Weston, Wilton and Ridgefield, be pillaged because the people in Hartford have mismanaged the state for the last decade? There is no logical reason to do so.

Nowhere in SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 do they mention the quality of the schools or the education the children will be receiving. How is that possible? Shouldn't the quality of the education be the number one goal? Weston has some of the highest test scores in the state. Hartford has some of the lowest. Maybe the Hartford district should model itself after Weston, Wilton or Ridgefield.

Regionalizing the schools will ruin the character of the small towns throughout the state. If we ruin the character of towns, not only will people leave the state, people will stop visiting the state, further hurting an economy that is #43 in the country according to US News and World Report. Instead of doing something as destructive as regionalization, how about the state look for ways to become business friendly to attract big companies to the state. How about Governor Lamont pick up the phone and call Jeff Bezos and give him whatever he wants to bring an Amazon campus of 25,000 jobs to the state. Do you think Stamford, Bridgeport or Hartford could use 25,000 jobs? I bet the answer is a resounding yes. Why not ask those residents?

Regionalization will destroy the state. I don't want to hear about tough decision need to be made for the people. We the people don't want it, don't need it and more importantly we do not need people hundreds of miles away trying to manage our schools when they have been totally inept in managing those in their own backyard.

In 2013, Seton Hall University did a study on the potential regionalization and consolidation of schools in NJ. The results made a strong argument against regionalization. The study stated. "The large number of school districts combined with the varying socioeconomic of districts that border one another prohibits effective consolidation or merger of school districts based on location. Since DFG (district factor groups) is a significant factor in student performance and outcome, merger or consolidation of school districts with different DFG classifications is dangerous to the public confidence in the overall success of the public education system. Districts that are in different DFG classification could expect to see wide spread fluctuation in student outcomes on standardized test. Post-merger student achievement results may paint a negative picture for the district with the higher DFG classification and a dangerously inaccurate depiction of improved student performance for the lower DFG classified district."

In closing, I hope the representatives of Hartford would open their eyes and ears to the people of small towns in CT and hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457 any SB 874 and any other legislation the opens the door for forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Sincerely,

Joseph J Castro

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