

To: edtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Subject: Opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874

As a parent of 3 school age children and a resident of Connecticut I oppose any bill that intentionally or inadvertently attempts to harm the education of children. The bills as they are written fail to address or cite any reference to how they will achieve 1) better schooling for ALL children 2) enhance the standing of Connecticut schools in the Northeast region and nationally 3) how this will serve the constituents that elected the officials who put forward this legislature. It should be noted in the record that Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist., Rep. Susan M. Johnson, 49th Dist. , Sen. Bob Duff, 25th Dist., Sen. Catherine A. Osten, 19th Dist., Rep. Joe Aresimowicz, 30th Dist., Rep. Matthew Ritter, 1st Dist. have put forth this legislation as an attempt to enhance collective bargaining and to strip money from public school children and residents of Connecticut in an effort to shore up their own personal pension system.

In addition to the illicit attempt to extract public funds for personal gain, the passage of these bills would almost certainly cause irreparable harm to the state's revenues and balance sheet and further exacerbate the negative population effect within the state. The quality of the school systems and lower tax rate was what brought my family to the state originally. Over a thirty-year period we've removed the first benefit (Connecticut is the second highest taxed state in the country¹) and the passage of these bills would remove the second. Moreover, if the state was in fact looking to reduce costs within the school systems, they may look to have schools in a particular region elect (under their own volition) to collectively negotiate contracts for goods and services. For example, negotiate a better rate on food service or natural gas by combining towns into one service contract.

The issues addressed in this testimony focus on our schools, but they have larger roots in the core ethos of our state. As a once great, low tax enclave of the New York Metropolitan area, we've been impacted by prior irresponsible fiscal decisions (from both parties) that have left us in an untenable situation. These pension liabilities that are hung around the neck of every resident will persist even if the above legislation is passed. In addition, families like mine have already begun making arrangements to leave our community and state. I know from discussions I've had that other families are contemplating the same. Anecdotally, we have friends that are relocating from Hingham, MA to Wilton and are shopping for a home in town. After reading the bills I've sent them, they put their search on hold and are instead looking to rent closer to New York City.

As a resident of this state I'm not naïve to our challenges and I do believe that shoring up the pension system is a truly non-partisan effort that should be handled in an inclusive manner, not in a way that puts towns at odds with each other and the state. This effort as it is proposed in SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 to reduce costs on the state will ultimately back fire. Instead of looking for methods to tax and take from the very people that you were elected to serve, lets address as a State how we solve the real issue at hand, pension liabilities.

The quality of our schools is something that has built up over time and can continue to improve if and only if they are allowed to continue to operate in the manner that puts education ahead of personal gain. They are the greatest and at this point one of the last assets this state has to offer anyone.

Signed,

Richard Chute

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