

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed bills concerning regionalization of Connecticut's public schools, SB 738, SB 454, and SB 457. As a parent advocate for those students suffering with mental illness, emotional issues, and behavioral issues, I am concerned for this vulnerable population. These students need small classes with individualized attention to meet their varying needs. In the proposed large, centralized districts, these struggling students will be forgotten and fall behind. Currently only one in three students suffering from mental illness, emotional issues and behavioral issues graduate from high school. They are the group that fares the worst in the special education programs, and minorities are disproportionately affected. Large-scale districts will not be able to attend to this struggling population, resulting in an increase in disciplinary measures and an increase in the already high drop-out rate. Currently one in three mentally ill students are suspended at least one time. Often the suspension is related to the student lacking a skill set, their needs not being met by the educational system, and the expression of their frustration in an inappropriate manner. We need to do far better for this population, not worse!

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Sincerely,
Aimee Cohen