

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

As a parent of young public school students my husband and I moved to Wilton CT because of the schools. We both prioritize the importance of our children's education. These bills do not mention the quality of education. Forced regionalization would erode the quality of the education the children received in our town and CT as a whole. In fact the study K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut: Pros, Cons and Surprises By: Orlando J. Rodriguez, Rodriguez Data Solutions LLC by the Hartford foundation offers many examples where this would be the case and it specifically notes that "Policies that call for wholesale regionalization based on imposed criteria can have unpredictable, and often adverse, consequences." Students do better in smaller schools. My children have grown tremendously overcoming many obstacles due to the support they receives their teachers and the administrators within the elementary school. There is no doubt in my mind they and many other children would not be getting the level of education and support they need Wilton were forced to regionalize.

Additionally, regionalization will take the control away from our town and give to others who do not fully understand the needs of our children and our town. I have personally sat through budget meetings and know that the people voting on the issues affecting our children and our town understand the best way to address them. The town and the parents should have a say in the local oversight of our children's education.

While regionalization could allow for cost savings in certain areas, there are many areas in which it will increase costs. For example, potential higher transportation expenses because of longer bus routes, overall increases (leveling up) in staff salaries because of seniority and/or contract renegotiation, and increases in the number of mid-level administrators and administrative support staff. Wilton, and other towns in CT are already working on cost reductions with other towns where it makes sense without sacrificing the quality of our children's education.

While I love Wilton and CT, if this were to pass this would be a driving decision to leave the state. I have heard this sentiment echoed by many and know of others who have decided not to move to CT.

I urge you to oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Thank you,
Jessica Cooney
Wilton CT