

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

Dear Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Barthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

I am writing to state my opposition to SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874. Our family moved here from the Midwest in 2010 from a community with highly nationally ranked public school systems. Our goal was to find a community that could rival those school districts that we had left. Not knowing anything about CT, we landed in Wilton because our children (now 6th and 4th graders) would get a well-rounded quality education. After 7 years of being in the Wilton Public School System, we have found that the quality of the education is excellent, and I firmly believe that forced regionalization will compromise that quality we have come to expect. Not only are you going to reduce the quality education, you will reduce the quality of life surrounding that education by reducing economic and housing standards. Your plans will have a dramatic effect on how the State of CT is valued. Businesses have already moved out. Now people will move out. And any idea of attracting new businesses and people will be faltered.

I do not support the forced regionalization bills before the Connecticut state legislature (SB 457 and SB 738 (formerly SB 454) and SB 874). A foundational value of Connecticut educational system is the importance of *local* voice and *local* control in educational decision making. Therefore, mandating regionalization (or mandating any such action that would fundamentally remake school districts) undermines the values and beliefs that guide Connecticut school systems. These bills are completely inconsistent with what we value as Wilton residents and citizens of Connecticut.

Furthermore, there has been no evidence presented indicating this would improve educational outcomes or reduce cost. Nor do any of these bills include any mention of school quality.

Looking at the bills and thinking about my school district and the region, I do not believe that regionalization would be beneficial for our students, for our schools, for our community and for residents of Connecticut. Forced school regionalization will deter new families from moving to CT and will encourage people to leave CT – both of which negatively impact the economic rehabilitation of our state.

Thank you reading my written testimony. I hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Couch
Wilton, CT