



SOMERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE
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S.B. No 457; S.B. 738; S.B 874 (School Regionalization)

Members of the Education Committee,

I am submitting this written testimony in opposition to S.B. 457, S.B.738, and S.B. 874 which mandate regionalization of small school districts. All of these bills have the underlying goal of seeking efficiency while reducing costs. Expense containment is a common goal but shouldn't be achieved by sacrificing the quality of education for our students. A one size fits all approach to regionalization is irresponsible and disrespectful to the community as it ignores their wishes.

State statues delegate the responsibility of providing a free and appropriate education to the local and regional boards of education. The ideal of local control is a hallmark in Connecticut and is something community members are firmly committed to. These bills that force regionalization will eliminate local control of the schools. School districts sharing a Superintendent will no longer have the individualized commitment that a local Superintendent provides. The vision, philosophies, and strategic plans that address the unique needs of the community will no longer be considered.

The proposed cost reductions will pale in comparison to the increased expenses and unintended consequences:

- Unifying the various administrative systems will require significant data transfer, licensing, implementation, and training of staff. All come at a cost.
- Consolidating the different instructional models and programs will take years. Purchased resources will be discarded and new ones will need to be secured. The significant investment in staff training will become irrelevant as teachers will need to be re-trained in new instructional programs.
- To achieve substantial savings, forced busing to schools outside the town of residence will need to be instituted, especially for those living near the borders.
- Districts with lower healthcare premiums will be forced into a higher risk pool. Teachers and communities will see increased premiums, budgets, and taxes.

The premise that small school districts have "inefficient governance structures" is uninformed. The administrative structures in small school districts are lean. Small school district Superintendents take on many responsibilities such as leadership governance, human resources, policy, strategy, communications, and security. In larger school districts, these tasks are often delegated to assistant superintendents, executive directors, directors, managers, and support staff. Small school district governance structures do not have these positions and thus model a shared services approach.

I truly understand the need during these difficult times to look at efficiencies and cost reductions. The one size fits all mentality is not the responsible way to address this. The broad stroke of the regionalization brush will antagonize communities as local control will be lost, eliminate the neighborhood schools parents desire, and add unintended consequences and associated costs.

Respectfully,

Brian P. Czapla
Superintendent of Schools