

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing testimony on this important issue today.

We, the Darien Board of Education, write you in opposition of bills 457, 738 and 874. We hope you will consider our comments and recognize that as locally elected state agents we are your “boots on the ground,” the people who grapple with the impact of educational policy on our local communities, and most importantly with the direct effect on students.

We understand that you are charged with reviewing all proposals, but we would implore you to please reach out to local communities to best understand what

these bills would mean to Connecticut and our students.

The Darien Board of Education is now, and will remain committed to the quality public education of our children, with a locally elected Board of Education acting as state agent.

There are many significant factors within the state that must be considered as we move to improve Connecticut's fiscal situation. However, it would be short-sighted and ill-informed, to begin that process by dismantling school systems that still provide children with a quality education, including those districts that have worked hard to manage budgets, despite significant and sustained funding cuts.

We believe schools exist for children and we have significant concern that none of these bills begin to address the educational issues and direct impact to

students that might arise with such consolidations. The studies proposed in SB-874 mention transportation, athletics and special education but fail to mention, assess, or calculate the learning differentials, services provisions, or the curriculum delivery changes to general education students, including the state mandated SRBI program.

Further, while the goal behind each bill is reportedly cost savings, no evidence has been provided to validate those claims. We feel it unwise to mandate regionalization when the stated goals have yet to be clearly investigated and described for understanding and consideration.

We oppose these bills based on our belief in the Connecticut public school system and the core institutional beliefs on which it was built, and we ask that you do the same. When change is necessary, it

should be brought through thoughtful forward thinking, evidence-based ideas that include the perspective of those who work on these issues daily. If and when that evidence exists is presented, it should be examined by the affected communities so they can understand and comment on both the benefits and burdens of the profound changes that are being proposed.

As a Board of Education, we are committed to putting the education of children first because education is the key to their future, and ours. Connecticut has always been proud to stand united in our commitment to education. Please do not let the blunt force of any overreaching statutory changes divide us.

Thank you again for permitting testimony today, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tara B. Ochman

Chair, Darien Board of Education

David Dineen
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