

To whom it may concern,

I am e-mailing you with regard to Senate Bill 457 and Senate Bill 738. I am a student at Lyme-Old Lyme High School, which is part of the Region 18 School District. My high school, which contains around 400 total students, is my home away from home. Our small size allows for a broad range of programs, both academic and extracurricular, and it offers students opportunities they would not have access to in a large, state-created district. In the Region 18 District, students have formed a tight-knit community with one another. Everyone knows everyone; there are few "outsiders." The District has worked diligently, continuing to improve school climate and spirit over the years. There is a strong bond among the members of our district which allows us to feel like more of a family. The proposed bills (Senate Bill 457 and Senate Bill 738) will destroy the familiarity which we've worked so hard to create. Our district would be split in two, not to mention the effect the proposed change would have upon students. Our close student-faculty ratio allows for more amity and connection between students and teachers, where no student is left to slip through the cracks. In a large district, it is easier for some students to fall behind and be lost.

Additionally, Senate Bill 457 and Senate Bill 738 will cause harm to the "small-town America" New England culture which we have maintained in Lyme and Old Lyme. Our size allows for closeness and intimacy which will be lost, should we be forced to divide ourselves and join larger districts. Our towns are exploding with New England history which can be incorporated into a wide array of our district's activities, both academic and otherwise. Our school even houses a Local History Club in which students have the ability to explore the notable figures, features, and evolution of our cozy town. Thrust into a massive district, students would not have the opportunity to experience that culture nor explore that personal connection they have with history. The proposed bills will deny the students within smaller, more intimate school districts the freedoms and opportunities which they seek out in order to build both their personal and academic successes.

Furthermore, the idea that Senate Bill 457 and Senate Bill 738 will help in terms of finance lacks merit. By eliminating the smaller districts and forcing students to integrate into larger ones, state residents will be spending more money. Constructing enormous districts does not only make it harder for students/curriculum/student activities to be managed, it also will ultimately cost the taxpayer more money due to the sheer amount necessary to properly regulate a school/district of such size. Efforts to avoid this by not pouring money in would only reduce the quality of the education which students would receive. As you can see, there is no positive outcome.

Senate Bill 457 and Senate Bill 738 propose actions which our students neither want nor need. The efforts presented by these bills will not only destroy the positive, close-knit learning environment which our students value, they will also harm the quality of education which our students receive using taxpayer money. Connecticut legislators must recognize that to force these changes upon school districts based upon arbitrary data, such as population numbers/enrollment, would be irresponsible. Students are the future of this nation, and to lower the standard of education is nothing short of negligent. As a student, a Connecticut resident, and a citizen of America, I can assure you that to pass Senate Bill 457 and Senate Bill 738 would be a mistake.

Sincerely,

Arianna DelMastro  
Lyme-Old Lyme High School  
Region 18 School District