

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senator Looney & Senator Duffs proposed bills PSB 738, PSB 457 and PSB 874 which would force regionalization of Connecticut public schools. Having attended Junior High school in a district with large-scale systemic consolidation in West Hartford (Project Concern from Hartford), I experienced first hand the negative effects of county wide run school systems: most salient being lower student achievement, disengaged teachers, higher teacher turnover and a one size fits all method of education that ignores significant variation. I was a mere number among tens of thousands in a failing district. I am thankful that my parents had the means to pull me from said district and I can attest that it took me several years to catch up to my peers after the fact, given my reading and math levels fell significantly behind.

As a parent of public school students in Ridgefield Connecticut, I have witnessed first hand the benefits of locally run public schools. My children are educated in a nurturing environment where teacher engagement is high, individualized student learning is understood and acknowledged and high achievement is praised.

Though I understand how economies of scale appear attractive from a fiscal standpoint, this bill attacks our most precious asset as a community and as a state - the quality of our schools. If approved, this bill would only further an additional outflow of residents, many of whom came to this state for the schools, further eroding state revenue and worsening the state's fiscal crisis. Further, I am certain that the geographical incompatibility of the surrounding towns in Fairfield County alone would increase transportation costs, thereby negating any savings offered via economies of scale and would only succeed in eliminating local control and harming school quality.

For these reasons, I implore you for your support in opposing SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 or any other efforts to force consolidation of Connecticut public schools.

Sincerely,
Jane Donnelly