

2/26/19

To Whom It May Concern,

As a parent of public school students and an employee of a public school system, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

I have seen first-hand that children of locally run public schools are educated in a nurturing environment where teacher engagement is high, individualized student learning is understood and acknowledged and high achievement is praised. Any of these three bills mentioned above will erode the quality and the character of our local schools, which erodes the quality of the towns affected. Locally run school districts are special. Teachers and administrators work hard to provide an outstanding learning environment for our children. 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. In fact, research by the National Education Policy Center concluded that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated", and an article in Education Finance and Policy suggested that district consolidation may actually create negative impacts such as higher transportation costs, a "leveling up" of salaries, and more negative attitudes among staff members and parents. Not one of these three proposed bills mention the quality of our children's education.

According to the US News and World Report: 20 of the top 25 schools in Connecticut are public and locally run. Of those 20, 11 are in Fairfield County. CT's number 10 ranked school is ranked #439 nationally. In Vermont (which has regionalized school districts) the number 10 ranked school is #2314 nationally. In New Hampshire (which has regionalized school districts) the number 10 school is #2010 nationally. Regionalization does NOT produce positive outcomes. People are vastly concerned about potential impact of larger school sizes, decreasing administrator and community engagement. There is evidence that this is already preventing people from coming to CT, or is driving decisions of people to leave CT which will directly and negatively affect the state's economy.

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

Thank You,

Heather Dustin, Norwalk, CT
Employee of Wilton Public Schools