

## Public Hearing Testimony

Co-Chairman Senator McCroy and Representative Sanchez, Distinguished Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative McCarthy and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Marion Filley and I oppose SB 457, 738, 874 and HB 1071 regarding school regionalization and teachers pensions for the following reasons.

In June of 1987 my husband, 3 children and I moved from a rent stabilized apartment in East Harlem to Wilton CT. I had been appointed to Community Board 11 by City Councilwoman Carolyn Maloney (a Democrat and currently the US Rep for district 12 in NYC.) I served from 1983-1987 representing East Harlem until we moved to CT. We found Wilton after I contacted the BOE in Hartford asking for the mastery test scores for the 4th, 6th and 8th grade. I received booklets with the scores from the entire state. From those booklets we made our selection.

For 30 years I have been selling real estate in my home town and surrounding area. The number one reason people move to my area is the school system. My job is to help my clients either find the perfect home or help them sell their home so they can move on. Since the introduction of Senator Looney's bill and all discussion pertaining to regionalization and increasing taxes to the towns I serve, the number of buyers who now question a move to CT or to certain towns is truly alarming! In 30 years of selling homes in this area I have never, ever had anyone question the direction the schools or state was taking. This is the engine that drives many of our communities.

By increasing the taxes, the local towns pay, by taking away our personal property taxes on vehicles, making us pay for teachers pensions not to mention the declining funding of our schools you strike at the very heart of our towns. What is the State doing to cut their spending? My town has never recovered from 2009. Our taxes have gone up significantly and the services declined. There is no wiggle room to fund the state debt.

Recently I have read a plethora of studies on regionalization both local and nationally. I have based the following reaction on that research.

“Decisions to deconsolidate or consolidate districts are best made on a case-by-case basis. While state-level consolidation proposals may serve a public relations purpose in times of crisis, they are unlikely to be a reliable way to obtain substantive fiscal or educational improvement.”

Howley, C., Johnson, J., & Petrie, J. (2011). Consolidation of Schools and Districts: What the Research Says and What It Means. Boulder, CO: **National Education Policy Center**.  
from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/consolidation-schools-districts>.

- 1) Bill 874 outlines vast studies to examine regionalization. There are many resources already available that would not require taxpayer dollars for a study which by the makeup outlined in the bill does not appear to be balanced. Having read the composition of the various different study groups they would not be unbiased and I believe the conclusion forgone. (The state should hire a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan agency to conduct any study.) So far many of those pre-existing studies have concluded a) regionalization is not cost effective and b) does not improve the quality of education. I would be suspect of any study initiated by a party with a stated goal of forced regionalization. It will not be an impartial study. Why spend the money when the state either has the data from current consolidations or readily available studies which I would be happy to share with the Educational Committee.
- 2) HB 1071 The pension funds were negotiated by the state and should not be tossed upon the towns who had no say in the outcome. The state is taking the personal property tax on vehicles already. Adding the costs of the pensions to our budget will cause further damage and dramatically impact the town services. Unlike the state the towns need to balance their budgets.
- 3) Senate Bill 738 suggests mandating consolidation along probate court lines which would separate schools that are already regionalized and put schools from towns of a population of 87,000 with towns of 18,000 together. Consolidation should be voluntary. This bill will not create a better educational system or economies of scale.

- 4) Senate Bill 457 This Bill will morph dramatically from this concept and should it expand the parameters, it would have dire consequences for successfully performing school systems. Consolidation should be voluntary.

I would like to leave you with these thoughts obtained from other studies.

- 5) According to a new report on K-12 School District Regionalization in Greater Hartford, it warns that “K-12 regionalization can actually increase costs and harm educational outcomes.” The Hartford Foundation 2018
- 6) A 2011 study by the National Education Policy Center found the savings from school consolidation are “vastly overestimated.”  
(<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED515900>)

In conclusion I ask that you not let **any** of these bills out of committee. They will do more harm to our academic institutions and cause severe hardship to our towns. Please vote no.