

To the Members of the Education Committee:

The following reflect my personal views as a citizen and are not those of the district where I serve as a teacher in Fairfield nor the Orange Elementary district where I serve on the Board of Education. My professional obligation to my students in Fairfield prevents me from testifying in person before you during your 1pm Hearing on March 1.

I strongly oppose the ill-conceived and destructive proposals brought forward labeled SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 attacking local autonomy and thriving school districts like the one I represent in Orange.

In the district that I represent as a member of the Board of Education, we have historically as well as recently achieved tremendous academic success while being fiscally responsible. There are a myriad of reasons for this: local commitment to funding and supporting outstanding schools, talented teachers, invested parents, and dynamic leadership. These triumphs have continued in recent years despite the Connecticut Legislature's failure to pay our town a fair share of resources due in the deeply flawed and unfair Educational Cost Sharing System.

Success has prevailed despite decades of ill-conceived unfunded and underfunded mandates passed by your body. Now, some in the Legislature have proposed destroying what we have built.

We simply cannot tolerate this.

The Orange Public Schools has been one of the most successful in America because of, not in spite of, its size. Here are just a few accolades: For example, Peck Place earned a National Blue Ribbon School. Race Brook School's Principal Mike Gray has been selected by the Connecticut Association of Schools as Principal of the Year.

Our existing middle and secondary level Amity Regional District is highly accomplished and regarded and should be a model of what can be accomplished, rather than a target of destruction by these proposed bills. Just a brief some of the recent accolades available on their website:

- The district received the prestigious 2015 CQIA Innovation Prize, Connecticut's Malcolm Baldrige National Award for 'Fostering a District Culture of Maximizing Cost Savings and Efficiencies'. This achievement was recognized by the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) and an article on this innovative practice was published in the Association of School Business Officials International November 2015 School Business Affairs magazine.
- US Department of Education 2014 National Blue Ribbon School

Our Orange/ Amity community has educated our students while also submitting responsible budgets, yet simultaneously paying taxes to the State that seldom come back to our community dollar for dollar, and still we have thrived.

It has been disheartening, but not surprising, to see increasingly less-and sometimes the threat of almost no-state monies coming back to Orange, while we are asked to bail out mismanaged larger cities to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

I hope you can understand that we, in local communities, know much better than you in the Legislature how to build, maintain, and encourage student success, without running up huge debt. We have no desire to be managed by the state of Connecticut, whose record in education and financial mismanagement is inferior to our community's accomplishments.

I respectfully suggest that instead of attempting to destroy high achieving, fiscally responsible school districts, you perhaps visit Orange and our Amity partners, and learn more about how and why we are thriving.

Please vote down these bills swiftly in committee.

Sincerely,

Charles Flynn

Orange, CT 06477