

February 28, 2019

Dear Committee Members:

As an educator, mother of three young children, and citizen of Wilton, CT, I am writing to you in strong opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874.

Any time decisions are made concerning schools, it is imperative that our children's best interests are foremost in mind. *These bills and our representatives' rhetoric concerning them are conspicuously and disturbingly absent of concern for all students' well-being and educational best practices.*

Much of the conversation has centered on a need to reduce costs. I understand Connecticut is in dire fiscal straits. Again, though, this push for regionalization is terribly misguided.

You do not need a committee to study regionalization; instead, simply look to the experiences of our New England neighbors to the north or, indeed, where regionalization has been implemented elsewhere in our country. All students, *regardless of demographic*, do not benefit from regionalized schools. Larger educational communities lead to greater disenfranchisement; parents are less involved and teachers struggle to nimbly meet the needs of the particular students in their classrooms. The quality of education suffers. And while it may seem counterintuitive, regionalization does not save money. Transportation and extra layers of administrative bureaucracy, for instance, only add to costs.

Wilton and many other smaller Connecticut towns with award-winning school systems work very hard and sacrifice much to keep them that way. Wilton officials work tirelessly to manage their budgets effectively. Wilton already engages in numerous creative cost-saving and cost-sharing measures.

All students in Connecticut deserve an outstanding education. Your efforts are better spent focusing on improving districts that are struggling rather than robbing high-performing systems of their autonomy, an ingredient critical to these systems' excellence. The state needs to focus on other measures—like pension reform—to shore up Connecticut's fiscal health. Taxpayers in high-performing school districts understand that they will pay more, sometimes a lot more, in order to support these autonomous systems that can nimbly react to students' needs. If you take away these top-performing schools, you remove the single reason why your most affluent tax payers remain in the state.

Regionalization will not improve Connecticut's fiscal health nor will it improve educational outcomes.

Respectfully,

Lindsay Fontana