

Tina Gilbert, Lyme, CT  
Written Testimony Against  
Bills 457, 738, and SB 874

Hello,

My name is Tina Gilbert. I am a resident of Lyme. My husband and I have two daughters in the Lyme-Old Lyme Public School system. Ten years ago, after we had our children, my husband and I made the difficult decision to sell our beloved home in Deep River and move across the river so that our children could go to school in the highly ranked Region 18 School District. We settled in Lyme. Lyme is a quiet hamlet. It features beautiful protected land and is governed with fiscal prudence. It, along with Old Lyme make up the Region 18 School District. Lyme and Old Lyme are for the most part an integrated community. Different municipalities, yes, but the people who live in the towns are friends and neighbors. We attend the same local functions, the same churches, the same Parks & Recs programs, celebrations, and funerals. We have a joint Youth Services Bureau that offers amazing programs to residents in both towns. We work together as a joint community on charitable projects. We even have a local publication: Lyme & Old Lyme Neighbors. We are inherently integrated as part of each other's fabric. The Bills supporting Forced Regionalization will tear at that fabric.

In 2018, Forbes ranked Connecticut #3 in the Union for the best public school systems. When considering where to move, people base their decisions on cost of living, housing, traffic, schools, safety and job prospects amongst others. As I see it, schools and safety (and family) are perhaps the only things bringing people to or keeping residents in the State of Connecticut – it's certainly not the cost of living or the job prospects given the mass exodus of businesses.

These Bills will further force residents of CT to a tipping point. As Representative Stevenson said in a recent Hartford Courant article "It's very concerning when you're up ending one of the most fundamental decisions that families can make..." this in regard to school choice and buying a home. It is upending our family. If these proposed, disastrous Bills go through, you will upend families and communities alike. My husband and I will certainly make the painful decision to move yet again for education.

I am shocked how adept this governing body is at producing more and more reasons for people to leave this State. It's already topping the lists for residents and businesses voting with their feet. I see these Bills amongst others recently proposed as a means to penalize its constituents

for the fiscal irresponsibility and flagrant wrongs committed by previous administrations and continued by the current.

In addition to moving our family to follow top education – the education we sought, if these Bills pass, I, along with many other residents, will actively work to vote out of office any legislator who makes the cataclysmic mistake of voting for these Bills. That is my promise to you.

Thank you for your time.