

Re: Opposition to SB 457, 738, and 874

To: Distinguished members of the Committee on Education,

My name is Dana Haddox-Wright, and I have been a resident of Wilton, Connecticut since 2010. Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony regarding the following proposed Senate Bills related to the “forced” regionalization of select school districts within our fine State:

SB #457 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

SB #738 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

SB #874 - AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT.

I would like to make it very clear that I strongly oppose all three of these Bills. We moved to Wilton because we value quality education and Wilton School District has a reputation for providing a stellar educational system. Wilton school district not only provides a top- notch education for our “typical” students, but also one that serves students who are most vulnerable. We moved to Wilton not knowing that our daughter would later be diagnosed with severe epilepsy, which would lead to global delays and require her to receive special needs services through Wilton schools. Our community has always supported our small class rooms, our teachers, and our educational programs. I believe regionalization would take away local controls from our community and hence lead to a devastating loss of what makes Wilton’s school system such a treasure to members of the community. I am alarmed by the idea that members of our State’s government would forcefully impose laws on constituents without fully appreciating how distinct each community is. The larger an administration becomes, the more out of touch it can become with the unique needs of the people it supports.

As a parent of a special needs student, I am concerned that special needs services would suffer even more than they currently do as I have been witness to cuts in budgets to these much needed programs. Consolidating school governing bodies have the potential for cuts in special services in the following ways:

- Eliminating 1:1 para professionals, and placing more than 1 child with 1 para professional
- Cutting services or paring down therapies such that students have less time with therapists (OT, PT, Speech, Behavioralists)
- Potential for bussing out special needs children to receiving services off site

Raising a child with special needs is expensive. The cost of these services, if residents had to pay for them individually, would be astronomical. Please do not do anything that would change the current structure of Wilton’s schools.

Finally, if certain districts are struggling, it should be up to the city or town officials, with the assistance of the State Department of Education, to investigate and resolve in order to come up with actionable solutions. The three Bills above are not the way to go.

Thank you,

Dana E. Haddox-Wright
Wilton, CT

