

February 28, 2019
Regarding bill SB457 and 738

Dear State of Connecticut Education Committee,

My name is Shannon Haynes and I am a resident of Salem, Connecticut. Salem is a small town and that is why we moved here. We chose it to raise our family just because of its' small size. We have an Elementary School that is from preschool-grade 8. I have a daughter that is currently in the 6th grade and a son in 2nd grade. When I go to visit larger middle schools, I realize how lucky we have it. At our school the middle school age children are role models for their younger peers. They are more accountable for their actions. They actively help with the younger grades from reading to them, running field day, to volunteering at their after school programs. I love that my son's peers looks up to my daughter and see her as a role model. It makes me so sad to think about changing the way our school is set up. I feel it is really an ideal situation. Let's face it, middle school can be some of the most difficult times in a person's life. The thought that the state is looking into forcing our school to merge and form an even larger school infuriates me.

I know that the state feels that this will save them money. However, if you really look closely and do the math, you will see it won't. A few years ago our district hired a consulting agency to come in and evaluate if it would. Because we are such a small town with a lot of preserved land and little industry, we have high taxes. The town didn't want to raise our taxes again so they invested in this investigation. I am sure our Town Selectman Kevin Lyden can get you a copy of this. This consulting agency found that it would actually cost us more money. And it also brought to light how much control we would lose in how our school is run. Our town voted and it was decided there was zero benefit to us merging with East Lyme for the Elementary and Middle school. We currently are regionalized with them for our High School. Maybe there are some towns where this could save money, but there are some like ours, that this isn't the case. I don't think the state should make a blanket rule that forces all small towns to consolidate their schools without looking into each case. Maybe offer an incentive so towns can do what we did and see if it would save money in the long run. Then they can vote and decide together, like a true democracy, if that is what they want to do.

Our town did consolidate many services and programming as a result of this survey and investigation. We are open to sharing services.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
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