

To whom this may concern,

My name is Bryant Heffernan. My wife Sara, 4 year old son, Blake, and I live in Lyme, Connecticut. My son attends the Regional District 18 preschool program at the Center School in Old Lyme, CT.

I am writing this email to testify my disagreement with the Senate Bill 457 which will be an item for discussion at the Public Hearing on March 1st. This bill concerns merging existing school districts with fewer than 2000 students into existing, larger, school districts. This is a proposed action that my family and I strongly disagree with.

My son started his Region 18 student career in January 2018, at 3 years old, as a special needs student due to delayed speech. His experience in the preschool program, as well as what my wife and I have experienced with this program, has been amazing. Because of the small class size and very close knit relationships that the teachers and aids are able to establish with each student, my son's speech has caught up with his peers. He will enjoy one more year in this preschool program before moving on to kindergarten and elementary school at Region 18's Lyme Consolidated, and from there move onto Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School and High School.

The above outlined education plan for our son was a major reason that my wife and I moved back to Lyme. I grew up in Lyme and was a student in Region 18 from the second grade until I graduated High School in 2006. My wife was raised in Old Lyme and was a Region 18 student from preschool through High School. The small-town school environment helped us form friendships among our peers and relationships with our teachers that still exist to this day. By splitting and merging Region 18 into larger existing districts to simply meet an arbitrary enrollment number makes us fear that our son and his peers will not be allowed to experience the quality and value that Regional District 18 offers its students.

Thank you for your time and I hope that our grievances with Senate Bill 457 are heard and appreciated.

Bryant Heffernan