

I'm am writing in regards to the proposed legislation to consolidate school districts: Senate Bills 457 and 738 and Governor's Bill SB 874.

I can't in good conscience support these ideas. I live in Essex and teach in Regional School District 18 Lyme/Old Lyme. Connecticut consistently ranks quite high when comparing education services across the country. Regional School District 18 is ranked high in state and national test scores, and showcased in US News and World Reports. This is due in part to our teachers, class sizes, test scores, college prep, students continuing their education in trade schools or college, as well as amazing support from our families.

As a teacher in the state of Connecticut for 24 years I can speak to the changes that have occurred over the years. Lyme and Old Lyme have families move to town because of the strong curriculum, services offered, and class sizes. Class size is of the highest importance as more and more students requiring services and support attend school. Mandating towns to regionalize and assigning an arbitrary number of students that must be present in a school system in order to not have to regionalize makes no sense. I would like to know where the number of 2,000 students came from.

I am very disappointed in the timing of the hearing as well as the deadline for written submissions for comments. Being a teacher, I spend my days during and after school working with my students. Often times giving up my lunches or prep period during the day to give extra help. My evenings are spent correcting papers and preparing the next days lessons. There is no way I can take time from my teaching duties to attend a hearing during the school day.

I would encourage legislators to come to the small towns and spend some **significant time** in our classrooms to really see what is happening. I'd like to know what, if anything, legislatures truly know and understand about what happens in a 1st grade classroom, a 6th grade classroom, or a high school class in 2019.

I'm concerned once we move in this way, and realize it doesn't work, how do we undo the vast amount of damage that will occur. How do we help kids in crisis when our guidance counselors and school psychologists have to split their time between multiple buildings? In this time where the worry is making sure kids can thrive and succeed, I feel like we are moving backwards with these Bills. I'm concerned we won't have the proper resources to help kids work through their mental health challenges. We want a state of thriving children.

This is a slippery slope and if we don't allow **ALL** districts and towns to plan and create what is best for their own children, we will be in jeopardy of becoming a state of poor performing schools. Families move to towns like Essex, Lyme and Old Lyme for the schools. They prefer the class sizes and the open door policy for them to be an active participant in their children's learning. This will not happen if towns are forced to regionalize.

I sincerely hope members of the Senate and Legislature take a step back and think about what is being proposed with all three of these Bills. I hope logic and common sense prevail and Connecticut can continue to work at staying at the top of the education realm.

Thank you,  
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