

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

We strongly oppose bills SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 as it pertains to forced school regionalization.

We are residents of Darien and recently moved here primarily for the great school system as it stands presently. We think that the educational experience and efficacy of our school district will be significantly degraded if such legislation is passed. For the system and community that we chose, we pay a high real estate tax rate and we tolerate it because of the quality of the education for our children. As such, if these bills are passed and the educational system is degraded, we will no longer receive the value that we currently have and for which we are paying.

The quality of the public school system generally correlates to the home values in those communities. If the perception of the quality is reduced, the value of homes will likely decline. The potential for declining home prices in all communities is never positive. As we all know, people are leaving CT in droves. Friends of mine have already stated that if such legislation is passed, they, too, will leave the state and we would do the same. Imagine what our communities would become then, if certain schools would close, resulting in home values to drop significantly? The state's top income taxpayers recently left CT, reducing the state's revenue by \$200 million. In addition, people across all income groups are also moving out. These bills will only incentivize more residents to leave CT. Why not focus your attention on the reasons people are leaving and leave our schools alone, which is one of the only good things our state has going for it?

Let's also address what schools would look like under your proposed bills, and how it would affect our children's education and quality of life. By combining schools, class sizes would increase astronomically – an issue that has not been addressed in any of the bills. According to the Center for Public Education, children in all areas, urban and rural, thrive and receive the greatest benefit from a classroom size of 20 or under. Additionally, smaller class sizes in early grades can boost student academic achievement. That would no longer be attainable if you combined school districts. In another report, studies found that the graduation rate is higher among students who participate in after school programs, but participation in such programs decreases as schools increase their enrollment. This does not take into account the prolonged period of time children would spend on a bus route that they currently don't have. According to a report out of Hartford, transportation expenses would actually increase due to the longer bus routes. Bottom line: regionalization causes more harm than good.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Regards,
Andrea and Steven Jeraci, Darien, CT