

Testimony on SB457, SB738, and SB874 (Regionalization of Public Schools)

February 28, 2019

To the esteemed Chairs, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Education Committee:

I am writing in opposition of SB457, SB738, and SB874 and any attempt to regionalize Connecticut school districts. Local culture, student well-being, and property-value impacts are of particular concern.

Local School Culture:

Local schools are an essential part of each town's culture. These are where our children learn and play with their neighbors in a community atmosphere. As a community, we determine what the cultural priorities are for our children's education. This sense of community would be disrupted by regionalization.

Student Wellness:

As a parent of high-school and middle-school children, I know firsthand the importance of sleep to our children's well-being. The longer bus rides necessitated by bussing to centrally located schools, should that be necessary, would reduce the amount of sleep our children are able to get, with detrimental impacts on learning and school success.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that teenagers 13-18 years of age should sleep 8-10 hours per night to promote optimal health, and reports that

...adequate sleep duration on a regular basis leads to improved attention, behavior, learning, memory, emotional regulation, quality of life, and mental and physical health. Not getting enough sleep each night is associated with an increase in injuries, hypertension, obesity and depression, especially for teens who may experience increased risk of self-harm or suicidal thoughts (AAP, 2016).

Home Values:

Regionalization may have unintended negative financial impacts on towns and town citizens. As a homeowner, I am particularly concerned about its potential negative impact on property values. I choose to live in Cheshire in large part due to its excellent and safe schools; there's less reason to live here if the same educational benefit could be had in a more affordable town in the school region. Such a move would potentially devalue Cheshire homes and further encourage families with school-aged children to live in towns other than Cheshire, reducing the tax dollars available for education.

Although I am open to ideas about how we can get better economies of scale through shared resources, at present we do not fully understand the impact such a policy would have on Connecticut citizens and learners. I therefore urge you to oppose any legislation that would compel, or otherwise force, school district regionalization.

Sincerely,
Catherine A. Johnson
Cheshire, CT

Reference:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2016, June 13). American Academy of Pediatrics Supports Childhood Sleep Guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Supports-Childhood-Sleep-Guidelines.aspx>