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Dear Education Committee:

I am writing you to ask you to join me in opposing SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874.

My family has been in Connecticut for 50 years. My parents settled in Ridgefield when Xerox—where my Dad worked—relocated its corporate headquarters from Rochester, New York, to Stamford in 1969.

Mom and Dad were moved by many things about their new state. Having grown up in poverty in the hard coal region of Pennsylvania, they found the schools were unlike anything they had ever seen or imagined. Such opportunity! And as a feminist and a lifelong Democrat, my dad almost burst with pride when Connecticut elected Ella Grasso governor in 1974. This was surely a place where his three daughters could become anything they dreamed of.

After spending 4 years in Middletown as a student at Wesleyan University and 10 years working in New York City, I bought a home in Wilton with my husband so we could send our kids to the kind of excellent schools that we had growing up.

That excellent schooling is now at risk as Connecticut's children are being asked to bear the cost of the state's shortfalls.

When you cut towns out of the educational process or cut them off from funding, students suffer. There is no need to waste money on new studies or pilot programs: Studies have already been done. Failed attempts have already been made by other states. Regionalization—whether forced or coerced—is not in the best interest of our students and communities. We need to do better by our kids. We need to let our towns maintain control of their schools.

Challenge towns to find their own efficiencies. Do not dictate them. One size does not fit all.

Will I ever think of Governor Lamont with the same Nutmeg State pride that my Dad had for Ella Grasso? Will my kids choose to raise their own families here one day? I hope so. But not if we keep passing bad bills such as the three proposed here. I urge you to vote no on SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874.

Respectfully,

Mary Varilla Jones

