

Re: Testimony opposing bill numbers SB 738, SB 457, SB 874  
From: Jeffrey Kong, Wilton, CT

As a parent of students in Wilton public schools, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other bill that might open the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools. My family moved to Wilton (and Connecticut, frankly) for the schools. Forced regionalization threatens to be detrimental to the quality of our local schools, the character and economy of our town, and ultimately disastrous to the State of Connecticut by making it a far less attractive place to raise a family. The quality of education, which should be paramount, isn't even addressed in the three aforementioned bills.

If forced regionalization is enacted, I believe that Connecticut students (our children), and thus the entire state of Connecticut, will suffer irreparable harm as the quality of education falls while savings from regionalization have been shown to be negligible. Research by the National Education Policy Center concluded that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated." Further, an article in Education Finance and Policy suggested that district consolidation may actually create negative impacts such as higher transportation costs, a "leveling up" of salaries, and more negative attitudes among staff members and parents. The same study suggests that financial benefits may be found only when consolidation of very small districts of fewer than 300 to 1000 students occurs.

I also strongly oppose any legislation that looks to study or pilot any sort of forced regionalization initiative of Connecticut public schools, whether by mandate, by withholding state funds from districts that do not comply, or by any other means.

I hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that considers forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.