

## Testimony Opposing SB 874, SB 457, SB 738

As a parent of Connecticut public school students, I strongly oppose SB 874, SB 457, and SB 738, as well as any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

These proposed bills are destroying my hometown and our state's economy. The threat of forced school regionalization/consolidation has already done damage. Potential buyers are stopping their house searches. Houses previously under contract are back on the market. People are starting to look for housing in other states.

You see, no one moves to my town for the amenities (we have none – no ice rink – no swimming pool – no dog park). No one moves to my town for the easy commute to New York City (it's far from easy, quick, or convenient). No one moves to my town for the beaches (we're landlocked). No one moves to my town for easy walkability (you risk your life every time you try to check your mailbox). No one moves to my town for the downtown (what downtown?!).

People move to my town for ONE reason. The same reason I moved here. The only reason I am *still* here. Our SCHOOLS. Our local school systems are the last jewels this state has. For many Connecticut residents, our schools are the ONLY reason we are still Connecticut residents.

Please do not tinker with a community's right and responsibility to build and manage its school district. As a town, our core investment has been in our schools. That's been our decision *as a town*, versus spending towards other town amenities. Forcing our district to consolidate with another district, a district with its own unique characteristics and priorities, would essentially knock down the sole pillar of our community, with no good end. Furthermore, why would you touch a district that is doing very well and is getting little to no money from the state?

The logic of these three bills is flawed. First and foremost, any conversation about regionalization should be focused on education quality, not education cost. Regardless, several recent studies on regional school and district consolidation suggest that there is no empirical evidence to validate that such a move actually leads to any cost savings! A 2011 National Education Policy Center study claims that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated." And there is no study that shows that consolidating schools actually improves education *quality*. So if this isn't about cost savings and it isn't about improving education quality, what *is* it about?

Furthermore, I wholeheartedly oppose any bill that asks districts to voluntarily regionalize by attaching punitive financial consequences if they decline. To destroy a town economically while saying regionalization is voluntary is akin to removing a person's heart and saying you still gave them a chance of survival. Any such bill would be the equivalent of forced consolidation. You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig.

Finally, I can promise this committee three things:

1. We will fight this with everything we have. We will not stand idly by while you irrevocably harm the education of thousands of students across our state!
2. I will never vote Democrat again if regionalization/consolidation is passed.
3. We will move out of state. If you take our schools away from us, you will be destroying the last thread that keeps most of us here. YOU will be driving more hardworking, taxpaying families from this state forever and further destroying the state's economy and tax base.

**Our public schools are the cornerstone of our community, and we have built and painstakingly sustained them to meet the needs of OUR children. Forced regionalization would do tremendous harm to the quality of education of thousands of Connecticut students and would be an egregious violation of local control of our schools, not to mention it would destroy what's left of Connecticut's economy. Please don't change Connecticut's locally controlled education model. Let local boards decide what works for them.**

**I sincerely hope you will oppose SB 874, SB 457, and SB 738.**

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