

Good morning,

As someone who has never been actively involved in politics or raised concern over political issues, I felt compelled to add my citizen's concern here. I live in Ridgefield. I moved here one month ago specifically for the school system. We struggled to pay more to move here to ensure our child gets the best education possible. Had we not bought this home, we were moving out of Connecticut due to a myriad of issues facing this state that seemingly are just getting worse. But I fought to stay here and moved around Christmas. Now this bill (bills) will be eradicating the very reason we decided to stay in Connecticut. Word has it that "rich white people" in Fairfield county are upset. I moved here after working 21 years as a Marshal and Probation Officer. I dare say I'm rich. I grew up on state aid and was subjected to a childhood home life rife with all the mental health/substance abuse ills read in every day news. Not much family to speak of and intermittent foster placement threat in my home; however, this was the late 70's and 80's whereby things were done different then. My point is, I struggled my whole life. I was never given anything. I strived and overcame a predominantly negative childhood to put myself through Quinnipiac University at age 30 and I'll be paying that bill for the next 30 years. I worked 2 jobs (one being a homeless shelter) for seven years while in school with no days off. After being in Probation, I again worked 2 jobs for another seven years to purchase a home in North Haven; also with no days off. North Haven is a nice town; I'm not here to insult it. But, even where I lived I had to constantly worry about my home and vehicles being broken into. The school system also didn't rate as high. After 21 years in criminal justice, I simply got tired of it. I didn't want my child to have to deal with it. Nor should anyone. Even at her toddler program in New Haven, I had to constantly worry about the playground as it had to be checked for syringes, fecal matter and other discarded items on a daily basis. I chose Ridgefield for its peace and EXCELLENT school foremost. I wanted my child to attend school in a place where the schools were small and the faculty and administration knew us. Bonds that will be forged at a young age and cultivates a sense of community. I didn't have this as a kid. I was a number in school and while abuse in the home prevented me from any real learning or incentive, I was never assisted in school when I clearly had issues at home. I skated through school with zero motivation and learned very little. Yet I passed? Now, maybe you'll think; who cares? The apparent overall point for this bill is to help the less fortunate thrive and I'm no longer less fortunate. I have a heart; I get it. I WAS one of them and I spent 21 years trying to help society fight these issues. My own mother died from opioid abuse when I was young. But, these bills are not the way to go about it. With the brilliant minds in Hartford, I'm sure another avenue to assist kids can be engineered. All one has to do is look closely at Amistad in New Haven. Maybe figure out what makes THIS school so successful and rated top in CT and apply this to other schools not performing as well. It's a start. Additionally, once local control of education is gone, no one will be held accountable anymore. At least now, there is a checks and balances system and there is some transparency. With a state takeover, this accountability is gone. Additionally, the issue of teachers being prepared for a change like this is a big issue. Diversity is great. Forced diversity is not. I strongly oppose this bill and feel it will negatively impact not only the schools, but the very integrity of towns affected; which are many and not just "rich white folks" in Fairfield County. Sadly, I will move out

of Connecticut or be forced to come up with other options if this bill (bills) passes. And I'm not alone. Maybe regionalization passes; but be careful what you wish for. Connecticut may be losing the one thing that it still nationally recognized above the rest; AN AMAZING LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM and small town/schools that foster community. I'm sure private schools will flourish for a time, but I'll hedge my bets that people will no longer stay here and won't make a cross country trip to relocate here for the one real positive thing Connecticut still has to offer. Thank you for reading my very lengthy, personal views on this matter.

Tiffany Lawlor
Ridegfield CT 06877