

Senator Fasano,

I've been following the proposal to combine Connecticut school districts and my wife and I are incredibly concerned about the implications both intended and *UN*intended (but likely not unforeseen). To that end, we strongly oppose bills SB 457, 738 and, by default, 874, or any bill that proposes the forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

My wife and I moved to Darien nearly 5 years ago like many our age making the migration out of NYC back to a suburban life that we both grew up in, her in Coral Springs, FL, me in Farmington, CT. We accepted the 1 hr+ commute and robust Fairfield Co. housing prices in exchange for the quality of the public school system for our eventual family, that being the main driving factor in our decision. Having grown up in the public school system of Farmington, I know the value of a supportive framework with opportunities to explore and be challenged.

My two little girls are too young to attend school yet. Looking past the craziness of managing a toddler and an infant, we look forward to putting them into the Darien system that we've been counting on for the past 5 years. While I currently have limited first-hand experience in our system, I can only take the reviews of my neighbors and other families in town as validation that Darien prioritized building and maintaining the school system the town has come to be known for. It therefore very much alarms me that there's the potential that this could be in some way watered-down, resources stretched too thin, quality and a responsible, safe, supportive environment compromised. To what end? The "Statement of Purpose" for the bills offers no real rationale:

*#874: "To implement the Governor's budget recommendations"*

*#457: "To require certain small school districts to create new or join existing regional school districts."*

*#738: "To create a more efficient educational system."*

There are a LOT of ways to build efficiency into the educational system. This is hardly a justification for such a massive disruption and probable impact to the quality of our school system. There is also zero mention of quality in any of these statements, another cause for alarm.

This isn't about entitlement. We don't live beyond our means, we're a one-income family, we drive one car and it's a Mazda, we live in a modest Cape which gets tighter as our girls get older each day, we mow our own lawn and take our trash to the town dump each week like many, my wife and I take turns cooking virtually all meals for our family for the week and make a little extra to provide meals for a neighbor in need from time to time. I believe in working for what you can achieve and managing that responsibly. Darien has prioritized the education system above much else and it shows. I'm failing to understand how that responsible management is somehow now working to our detriment – and the not-too-distant entry into public school system for our girls.

We are VERY much against what's being proposed in bills 457, 738 and 874 and oppose any such bill that would open the door to reorganization of CT public schools. For us, it will jeopardize the quality of education and the safe, supportive environment we've been mentally invested in for years and why we've committed to be here.

Best,

John Lilliquist  
Darien