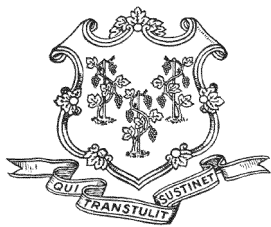


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Good afternoon Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez and members of the Education Committee. I would like to express my support for SB 738 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS, 874 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT, and SB 457 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Let's start with what these bills are not. They are not proposals to regionalize schools which would result in school closures and bussing of students far from their homes. These proposals are about creating efficiencies in the central office administrations of our school districts. If a town has within its borders only a single elementary school, that town does not need to have both a principal and a superintendent. Regionalizing these small school district administrations would benefit the towns by saving money and it would benefit the children because it would free up money to directly benefit the classroom experience that is now being used for duplicative administration

SB 738 would use some aspects of the highly successful regionalization of the probate courts as a model to regionalize central office functions in Connecticut Schools. The bill would create a commission of education experts to draft a regionalization plan; municipalities that would be subject to regionalization would certainly have input. The probate reorganization plan

had as a part of its operational structure the presumption that communities with populations under 40,000 would be part of a regional district and that those over 40,000 would continue to be single town districts. Obviously, adjustments to accommodate natural groupings would be made to create effective regional combinations rather than arbitrarily selecting a number that must be met.

I proposed this bill because this is a discussion we must have and I am pleased that other legislators as well as the governor also have proposals for school district administrative regionalization. SB 457 would require that any school district with a student population of less than 2000 join a regional district; this requirement would have a similar effect to SB 738 but with a different break point. The Governor's bill (SB 874) would, among other things, create the Commission on Shared School Services for the purpose of developing a plan for the regionalization or consolidation of school services and school districts. The Commission would present recommendations for regionalization. It appears that the governor's plan is focused on municipalities that have: (1) a population of fewer than ten thousand, (2) one or two elementary public schools located in the municipality, or (3) fewer than two thousand resident students. I believe each of the proposals have certain specific strengths and I look forward to working with all interested parties to create a workable regionalization plan that will benefit everyone involved – especially the school children.

Thank you for hearing bills on this issue of extraordinary importance.