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## TESTIMONY OF HOUSTON PUTNAM LOWRY IN OPPOSITION TO RSB: 457 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This testimony is submitted in opposition to RSB: 457 – An Act Concerning The Size Of School Districts.<sup>1</sup> I am an attorney who practices in the area of domestic and international commercial litigation. I have submitted testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly regularly since the mid-1980s. While I have been an elected member of the Avon Board of Education for more than a decade, I am speaking in my personal capacity.

There is an unspoken assumption that large school districts are more “efficient” than smaller school districts. I disagree with that assumption. I question how the “efficiency” is measured. Each school district is run by the local Board of Education as their local constituents require.

The Town of Avon provides an excellent education to its residents (and nearly 4% of CHOICE students enrolled in our school system). Avon spent \$17,184<sup>2</sup> per student in 2018 to fulfil its education mission. The cities of Hartford and New Haven spent \$19,616 and \$18,381 per student on 2018 respectively and I think Avon gets better results (and how results can be measured is also up to a certain amount of debate). Avon spends less than half the \$35,155 per student that Cornwall spends and I still think Avon gets better results than Cornwall. That is due to the hard work of the Avon Board of Education, our teachers, our students and our parents.

There is no doubt Avon is a smaller school district. I would hate to dilute our academic excellence by forcing us to merge with other school districts (even though Avon currently has a large enough student population that it will not be affected by the current draft of this bill). Local control of public education is a 350 year old tradition in Connecticut. That tradition should not be changed, unless it is done at a local level.

I request the Education Committee **NOT** report this bill to the General Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> As of the time this testimony is being submitted on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, 252 pieces of written testimony have been submitted in opposition to this bill and none have been submitted in favor. That would seem to suggest near universal local opposition.

<sup>2</sup> Data from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/spending/per-student>