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Subject: Testimony Opposing Bills: SB738, SB457, SB874

I am writing (and appearing on March 1, 2019) to oppose the bills; SB378, SB457, SB874 concerning Regionalization of Schools in CT.

As a resident, parent and taxpayer of the town of Trumbull, these bills will negatively impact my children, family and community. Trumbull population of approximately 36,018, as reported by 2010 census will fall under SB738 introduced by Senator Looney.

It has taken me several days to draft this opposition. Mainly because the idea is hard to comprehend and grasp. Communities that are delivering outstanding education for their citizens are being asked to bear most shared sacrifices to "fix" Connecticut. In addition, the bills are so vague (specifically Looney's SB738) that it is hard to dispute since there are no facts, ideas or suggestions. Therefore, here is my best effort to explain why it is unacceptable.

My understanding is the basis for regionalization is for sharing services to save the state money. The Town of Trumbull already make sacrifices in services provided to their citizens in order to allocate revenue from taxes to the services that are the most important to their constituents. These services consist of first and foremost education after that; police, public works, parks and recreation. All three of these departments share services within the Town of Trumbull already. For example, the public works maintain the grounds of the schools, plows the parking lots, etc. The police have a substation at Trumbull High School and patrol our schools. Finally, the parks and recreation work hand in hand in providing extracurricular activities for the students. I also believe the IT department assists with technology of the schools but am not positive in what capacity. As residents we pay for our own garbage pickup, have an additional tax for sewer (which is provided by Bridgeport), an additional small fire tax that subsidizes our completely volunteer Fire Department. Most if not all cities and large towns provide these services to their citizens. Trumbull choses not to and use the taxes for the vital services mentioned above. Therefore, regionalizing our school would be one less benefit provided to the residents that cities offer.

Trumbull like our neighboring towns has an excellent school system which has been recognized and awarded national accolades in the past years. Our test scores all substantially exceed the average in Connecticut. Our athletic teams are competitive and currently in the FCIAC finals for girls' and boys' basketball and our boys wrestling team is headed to the NE finals this weekend. Our "For the People" team is heading to Washington DC again this year. This is just mentioning a very few highlights of our achievements. These achievements are not just based on town property taxes and the minimal amount of money we receive from the State of Connecticut. This is, also from the strong commitment of the

community and the parents. An asset that would be compromised when forced to regionalize and lose the “town” aspect of school.

As for saving the State of Connecticut by regionalizing schools, again, without details hard to defend. But, taking the district court map which is a suggestion of how to regionalize, Trumbull could be merged with Monroe and Easton. How would this work? Easton is already a regional district with Redding and therefore does not have a high school. Would these students be forced to bus to Trumbull or Monroe? If so, how are the current at capacity (if not over) schools supposed to accommodate more students? Where would the cost benefit be if we had to add or update schools to accommodate? Same with the elementary schools, will Kindergarteners be expected to board buses for a 30-45-minute drive to another town? What about the availability for AP courses or places on athletic teams if more students are added to existing ones? The questions are truly endless.

In ending, the hardest part for me to comprehend is that these bills expect towns to sacrifice but have no plans or bills to fix the broken schools of the cities. The total 2019 municipal aid provided by the State of CT, to the 17 towns/cities in Fairfield County that these three bills will impact **COMBINED** is approximately \$60,668,451 with most of the towns expecting a decrease in 2020 and years to follow.

The 2019 municipal aid for Bridgeport (Fairfield County city) alone is \$216,542,679 – three- and one-half times larger than the 17 towns combined surrounding it. Hartford is 272,214,564 – almost four- and one-half times larger. Both cities have a broken school district. Does this committee or any legislature really believe the answer is to take from or punish those towns that have succeeded with less instead of looking for accountability for those failing?

Have you also thought about the negative impact this has on the entire state? The opposition to this from the towns is bi-partisan but is creating a town/against cities environment which is detrimental to the state of CT. Many students from Bridgeport attend Trumbull schools to balance equality. Is it perfect? No, should it better yes. This would only hurt it, if Trumbull were to take on additional students from Easton, how could we continue to welcome those students deserving of it in Bridgeport?

In conclusion, I find it ironic that SB738 is introduced by Senator Looney. Senator Looney’s constituents would only benefit financially from this once again. I challenge Senator Looney to propose a bill that will ask his own constituents to come up with ideas for shared sacrifice. The towns are already doing and have for years the best with the limited resources from the state. Finally, the idea of shifting 25% of the teacher pensions to towns is insane. It is Governor Lamont’s responsibility to come up with an idea to provide the pensions promised to the teachers and eliminate any future pensions to incoming teachers. This was discussed extensively in the election and Governor Lamont should stand by his promise and come up with a proposal that doesn’t simply shift the responsibilities on to the towns and the tax paying citizens of CT.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing that these bills ended here.

