

I am a resident of North Branford and my child will begin Kindergarten at the start of the 2019-2020 school year. Learning about these proposed bills has given me concern, and reading into them more has given me frustration.

Regarding Proposed S. B. No. 457, I can understand the significance of consolidation in which the student population is small. One may argue the small student population should provide for smaller class sizes and more effective instruction, however we all know that concept only exists on paper, as the smaller the district the less funds it receives. I don't believe this impacts myself or my children, but from a family perspective I am against this bill because I can potentially empathize with families it may detrimentally impact.

Regarding Proposed S.B. No 738, I am strongly against this proposal. The piece of this that causes the most frustration for me is right on the State document outlining this bill, under "Statement of Purpose:", it reads "To create a more efficient educational system". To make sure I understand this correctly, doing the following will make the educational system more efficient?

- Having students spend more time traveling to and from school (Jerome Harrison Elementary is 4 miles from my home, the elementary schools in Branford; the district we would combine with; are 5.8 miles, 7 miles, and 7.4 miles away)
- Potentially creating larger class sizes, which would lead to more stress put upon teachers
- Greater financial burden due to increased distance traveled, whether to the municipalities if by bus and to the families transporting their children on their own
- Environmental impact of more travel
- Longer distance to travel in case of emergencies
- Lesser opportunity for children to develop relationships with peers within their immediate geographical location
- Lack of community pride
- Greater opportunity to divide and demean students based on where they live; "You may go to school in Branford but you live in North Branford"
- Wasted buildings that become taxpayer burdens if schools become vacant

So how is this more efficient? These several points I suggested are relatively surface problems as well, as each factor holds several additional potential issues as layers peel away. All in all this is an irresponsible and reprehensible act of power by the State government to attempt to reduce budget problems by attacking children and their families. Shame on you. Children and their families, as well as educators and their families, should not have to experience compromise for poor spending and management over the course of several years by State officials. There are better and more productive ways to tighten budget gaps and even potentially increase revenue than attacking school districts, yet some politicians avoid these ideas because they would lose the votes of the residents who these measures wouldn't even directly impact. It's very disheartening to see Connecticut continue to fail and provide more reasons for its residents and businesses to consider leaving.

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