

Dear Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

I am sorry for not being able to make it to Hartford on Friday. I have work commitments which are preventing me from being there.

I am totally against the aforementioned bills for a number of reasons.

1. The State of Connecticut has very little to offer its residents, except for one major thing...it's a great place to raise a family. The most important element of raising a family is the quality of the schools. It's Connecticut's franchise...It's Connecticut's secret sauce. If you change the "secret sauce", then you risk making the most attractive thing about Connecticut much less attractive.
2. Town and Cities should have local control over their schools. They have elected board members from their respective Towns and Cities who know what policies work best for their local community. Local Towns and Cities have administrators who know what works best for the student population. Local Towns and Cities have parents who get involved with their schools and their teachers on a personal level. A "one size fits all" approach does not work.
3. I moved my family from Stamford to Wilton in 2006. The ONLY reason we moved to Wilton was to have better schools for my children. My job was located in Stamford. My extended family lived in Stamford. My friends lived in Stamford. My favorite restaurants were in Stamford. In fact, my wife worked for the Stamford School System as a teacher at Roxbury School in Stamford. However, we made the decision to uproot ourselves out of our comfort zone JUST FOR THE SCHOOLS. I am not alone. There are thousands of Connecticut residents who have made similar life-changing decisions like me.
4. There is no guaranty that regionalization will make our schools better. There is evidence that regionalization makes our schools worse or results in students withdrawing from the school districts. According to an article written by Suzanne Bump of CommonWealth magazine (April 7, 2018), "Enrollment in Massachusetts has declined by 1.6 percent, yet the numbers for the 58 regional district shows declines of 10.5%". Is that what you are looking for? Do you want students to withdraw from our schools?

**5. I am a commercial real estate broker who is involved with attracting new businesses to Connecticut. The uproar that has been created by the aforementioned bills has ALREADY created some hesitation from decision makers to postpone investment in Connecticut. Is that what we want? New businesses coming to our State is what we want and need!**

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to reconsider the regionalization of Connecticut schools. Our children are not experiments. Our children deserve what best for them...local people know our children better than people in Hartford.

Connecticut has some more pressing problems than our schools. I think the legislature ought to focus on fixing problems and not create problems with one institution that is actually producing good results.

Using a boxing analogy, the prospect of paying more in taxes and tolls in Connecticut are jabs to the head. Forced regionalization will be a knockout punch. Please do not move forward with these bills because, if they do move forward, you will have a defeated population.

Sincerely,  
Dominick Musilli  
Wilton, CT