

To: The Education Committee, Connecticut State Legislature
RE: Public Testimony - Strong opposition to SB 457, SB 738, SB 874

Dear Education Committee Members,

I am strongly opposed to SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 – all bills prescribing and mandating school regionalization to towns based on their size, number of students enrolled, as well as other seemingly arbitrary criterion that has created much distress throughout the state of CT. The very representatives that were elected by my community were instrumental in helping the Governor draft a 32 page bill on this topic that essentially dismantles local education as we know it.

Forced consolidation or voluntary consolidation with incentives discriminates against all schools, whether they are small, large, rural or urban, wealthy or struggling. No town is immune from the coercion of these bills that aim to take away local control of our schools and redistribute town revenues under the guise of “helping” the schools to save money.

Our state is in financial shambles and going after the working class families and their children is not the solution. Dismantling their communities and destroying their children’s futures to prop up CT’s financial mess is not the solution.

It’s true that CT is a state with some of the largest educational disparities in the country. Let’s find other solutions to fix this, as well as the gushing geyser of CT’s mounting financial liabilities.

Instead of tearing down high performing schools by “taxing” them or penalizing them financially, why not ask for their help in mentoring failing schools? Why not, ask for parent mentors, admin mentors, financial budget mentors, teaching mentors? In short, don’t fix when ain’t broken but draft bills that fix what’s broken in our state by crafting legislation that doesn’t offend the majority of CT residents who pay taxes in this state.

Our country is a democracy that was formed in reaction to Patriots being taxed by the British government without having any say in the way their communities were run...It’s called “Taxation without Representation” which is essentially what SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 propose to do. Ironically, our own elected representatives are proposing to TAX us and not represent us and our wishes. So it’s all a twist on what our founding Patriots experienced but still a derivation of the same model.

I urge you to reject SB 457, SB 738, SB 874 and any Committee to study regionalization, especially the proposal to have not one member from Fairfield County with the some of the highest performing schools in the country, on this committee. By rejecting these bills and all consideration of school consolidation, incentives to consolidate and consolidation study committees, you are reaffirming that CT, and this country, affirm the will of the people, not the politicians and not the financial ruin of our state that was created by years of governmental fiscal mismanagement.

Please do the right thing and find other ways to make CT prosper again and allow successful schools to help schools that struggle through sound management that allows each school district throughout the state to maintain local control over their schools, their tax collected monies, their individual town culture and values.

The next election cycle is not far off and I can guarantee that the will of the people will be heard loud and clear.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Kimberly Norton, New Canaan, CT

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