

February 28, 2019

Education Committee

Re: Opposition to SB 738, SB 487, and SB 874

Dear Legislators:

I am a resident of New Canaan, Connecticut, the parent of young children, and a registered Democrat. I write to strongly oppose the three recently proposed bills that purport to, in one way or another, force consolidation or regionalization of all or some Connecticut public school districts. At the outset, it seems unclear what the purpose of these bills is. To cut costs? Diversify? Address poverty, racism, and educational disparity? As a Democrat, I of course welcome discussion and action on diversification, poverty, racism, and educational disparity; however, school consolidation is an idea from the past that has not demonstrably helped solve these problems. Moreover, as a committed Connecticuter who is concerned about the fiscal woes facing our state, I am of course concerned about the former point, and welcome any and all ideas for getting the state's financial house in order. Again, however, school consolidation has been shown time and again not to result in significant cost savings. Moreover, the optics of the proposed legislation seems to have already had an impact on the minds of those considering a move here, and one has to wonder whether costs savings from school consolidation, if any, would be offset by the reduction in both home values and people moving here because of the perception that the quality of schools aren't as high as they once were.

Democrats should be looking for solutions that make Connecticut a place where people want to live, and that begins with schools. Schools are the heartbeat of their communities; identity and independence are vital. More to the point, our schools are the main draw for people moving here. We should not be taking actions that reduce their attractiveness to young families looking for their forever homes.

To reiterate, I strongly oppose all three of these bills, which would set our children and our state back. This is not the solution to Connecticut's problems.

Sincerely,

Hilary Ritter Ormond