

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and members of the Education Committee. My name is Joe Reardon and I am the part time Superintendent of Connecticut's smallest school district, Union. I work 65 days per year and there are no paid holidays, vacation, sick or personal leave days.

I do not support SB457 or SB738 because they are seriously misdirected and flawed.

The Union School District is a perfect example of effective regionalism and we have been engaged in it for years. We were the first school system to purchase health insurance the Connecticut Partnership. Through our RESC EASTCONN we purchase a broad array of services on a per hour or per diem basis. These services range from a full back office with a business manager, CPA, trained office staff and MUNIS financial software at a cost of \$16,500 per year. They also provide us with an array of special education services such as speech/language, psychological, OT/PT, program management and student evaluation. We also use them for staff development and curriculum training. The services of an IT specialist and public relations director are also available. They also provide us with flexible regular and special education transportation as well as cooperative bidding and purchasing services. Suffice it to say, our RESCs are unsung education heroes to small and large districts alike.

Our students in grades 9-12 attend either Woodstock Academy or Stafford High School which are our dedicated high schools. We have cooperative transportation agreements with both of these schools.

We have a highly trained professional staff of 7 full-time and 3 part-time teachers providing a full-time Pre K through grade 8 program along with art, music and PE. Three of our full-time teachers also carry appropriate special education certification.

There is a close working relationship between the municipal and education departments in Union. We share building and grounds services, special projects, as well as property and other insurance coverage. We provide an excellent and well-rounded education to our students considering the \$221,000 in ECS funds we receive from the State to support our \$2,056,000 local budget.

As a small school district we are efficient, effective and evolving. We are efficient because we collaborate with other districts and agencies and make good use of the diverse talents of our own staff. We are effective in that our children display excellent performance on a variety of academic measures and are socially engaged in the world around them. We are evolving in that we constantly assess our organizational and educational practices and implement changes that support our leadership role.

I urge you not to destroy the fabric of Connecticut's small towns. If you want to do something meaningful, think about decentralizing the Mega Districts with their impersonal bureaucracies. Divide them into neighborhood districts with the full force of personnel focused on individual student needs.

If the Legislature really wants to do something fun, form a COMMISSION to study the efficiency and effectiveness of all Connecticut state agencies and develop plans to help them deliver high levels of service at a reasonable cost. This is serious business! Straighten out state government agencies and move onto our next biggest financial drain, the big cities and you won't have to install tolls and increase taxes. Have the courage to take on yourselves! Talk to the Governor and have him do his part! Imagine a State of Connecticut that is actually efficient, effective and evolving! If Small school districts can do it you can too!