

Subject – Opposition to proposed bills (SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874)

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed bills (SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874). I agree that something needs to be done to improve the education quality in certain school districts and explore ideas that may result in cost savings at both the local municipality and state levels. I feel however that the way this conversation has been started has already been destructive to certain communities like Wilton where my family lives.

Simply using the phrase forced consolidation has been damaging to the reputation of many towns that have worked hard to give the children of the town an exemplary education. A reputation that in the past has given families thinking of living in Connecticut, a reason to choose our community. Incentivizing districts for taking steps to save costs may be constructive but not at the expense of withholding funding or increasing costs to districts that are operating responsibly. Escalating costs will quickly erode a functioning system that took a long time to build.

Since the conversation has now been started, I hope we can all agree that the best move forward would be to take a look at how certain municipalities have voluntarily put into place shared services and how that can act as a model to existing municipalities. Not with a blanket proposal to consolidate based on the district size or deciding to transfer even more costs to municipalities that have been managing costs sensibly.

In the past 4 weeks already too much of municipal and state intellectual resources have been squandered on challenging these bills. I agree a conversation will be beneficial but I do not think that any of these bills (SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874) as proposed are the way to get a handle on improving our state finances and education quality where lacking.

Regards,

William Santaniello

Wilton, CT