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To Members of the Education Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

My name is Mark Schuman, a resident of Canton Ct and a father of two children currently in the Canton School System. **I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to the idea of forced regionalization proposed in SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874**

My wife and I have witnessed firsthand the benefits of locally run public schools. My children are educated in a nurturing environment where teacher engagement is high, individualized student learning is understood and acknowledged and high achievement is praised. Who knows how to better educate your children?" I strongly believe that local communities make better educational decisions for students than legislators in Hartford.

Though I understand how economies of scale appear attractive from a fiscal standpoint, this bill attacks our most precious asset as a community and as a state - the quality of our schools. If approved, this bill would only lead to an additional outflow of residents, many of whom came to this state for the schools. I am also certain that the geographical incompatibility of the surrounding towns would increase transportation costs. Why would anyone want to see lower student achievement, disengaged teachers, higher teacher turnover and a one size fits all method of education? This is what you will get from regionalizing school systems. Would you want your children learning in this type of environment?

Moving immediately to forcing regionalization onto school districts without meaningful conversation and research is dangerous and misinformed. To my knowledge, Senator Bob Duff, the author of SB 457 and Senator Martin Looney, the author of SB 738 have had no discussion with any education experts or parents in Canton before proposing these bills.

The majority of families move to Canton for our proud history, Charm and outstanding schools. We have been fortunate to have a Board of Education that

has managed its budget to the penny in a responsible and cost-effective manner for years. Why should the residents of Canton be penalized for the mismanagement of the decisions of those in Hartford? We urge you to take these bills off the table until the idea of regionalization has been fully researched and the intent of the bills is a better educational experience for all students in Connecticut.

You will hear many reasons why forcing school districts to regionalize is inappropriate. You will hear about it being unfair to parents, teachers, administrators and the town's real estate and economy. This is all true, but most importantly, schools exist for children and neither of these bills begins to address the educational issues and direct impact to students that might arise with such consolidations. In summary, these bills do not make children the first priority.

Let's keep Connecticut a more attractive state for people to move to. Our school systems are some of the best in the country. Let's not forget that.