

February 27, 2019

Subject: Opposition to SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874

To: Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on my opposition to SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

I have been a resident of Connecticut for the last 12 years and have two children attending Connecticut public schools; five years in the Stamford school district and two years in the Wilton school district.

I have also spent the last 20 years of my professional career leading business transformation in the private sector including implementing shared services. I have been faced with fixing some of the very same challenges that the State faces today including slowing revenue growth, rising expenses and antiquated infrastructure.

Shared services is not solely about cost efficiencies. When executed correctly, shared services is about value creation and is a catalyst for **improved performance at a better cost**. Its purpose is to free up scarce resources to support high impact activities that are core to the mission and to improve the quality and efficiency of routine administrative functions.

Each of these bills lay out mandates, penalties and prescriptive criteria for forced regionalization of school districts – this is neither the definition nor the purpose of shared services.

All sustainable transformation is **co-created and tailored locally**. For change to last, we must share a common goal that fits the needs and includes the engagement of the local community. A clear business case and buy-in across all stakeholders is critical.

In addition, successful transformation requires a set of clear and transparent **principles** that guide us to make the best decisions and drive the desired outcomes. For example:

1. Equal or better quality for all – we must focus on improving quality for every student, teacher and administrator and not degrade the quality of one for the sake of another. None of these bills even mention school quality.
2. Revenue growth – foundational for any change in Connecticut is to attract investment and job growth across the State. As written, these bills deter investment in real estate and commercial business and will accelerate the loss of jobs and populate from the State.

3. Performance measurement – we need to benchmark, measure and communicate progress to ensure the desired outcomes are being met. Forcing transformation in a one size fits all manner as proposed in these bills is set up for failure.

I agree that Connecticut has substantial challenges and we need to change the way the State operates. However, forced regionalization of our schools, hidden under a veil of shared services, is not a viable solution to the achievement gap nor is it a solution to Connecticut's economic challenges. As written, these bills only deter investment in real estate and commercial business and accelerate the loss of jobs and population from our state.

I ask that you oppose SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 and any other legislation that forces regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions or discuss further.

Sincerely,

Amy Steenbock  
Wilton, CT