

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 SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

As a resident of the town of Harwinton, and parent of two children attending Regional School District #10, I ask you to not pass the aforementioned bills. I support school regionalization, but I do not support ***forced*** regionalization. Forced regionalization ignores the complexities and fosters decisions based on finances and politics rather than what is best for children.

Forced regionalization leads to more conflict than successes. Ten years after Maine attempted this, acknowledging this legislative failure, Maine is now focused on an ***incentive-based*** system for regionalization.

The Center for American Progress concluded that, “States should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to maximizing school and district size. While our report finds that many districts suffer from lost potential capacity due to their small size, there is no easy solution to this problem, and the best solution for one district may not be the best solution for another. What’s clear is that state-led consolidation is neither the only option nor the right solution in many cases.”

These bills would force regionalization on schools that are already providing high quality education at a reasonable cost, and in fact, break up already successful regional school districts, such as Region 10.

There is little to no evidence that large school districts produce better educational outcomes, and more evidence that large districts are generally detrimental to education outcomes. Creating overly large new regionalized districts, as outlined in proposal SB738, is likely to have negative effects on education. This will lead to more people leaving Connecticut and an net financial loss to the state.

The New Jersey Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization concluded that, “Sharing administrative services doesn’t necessarily cut costs, because as personnel begin to take on region-wide responsibilities, it often becomes necessary to hire more staff to support them.” This demonstrates that the Governor’s proposed bill to force shared superintendents is flawed.

The state should also not be denying our children any ECS funds they deserve due to political agendas.

While I admire the legislature's desire to provide the highest quality education at a reasonable cost, these bills are not the solution to the existing problems that some of our small towns are facing.

Thank you again for reading my written testimony.

Stephen M. Thomas

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