

February 28, 2019

To: CT Education Committee (edtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

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

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

As a parent of two public school students, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools, most specifically the Canton School District in which our family resides. When we moved back to Connecticut 11 years ago, we CAREFULLY and DELIBERATELY chose Canton as our place of residence BECAUSE of its small, excellent school system. I adamantly oppose the school consolidation legislation proposed by the Legislature and the Governor for the following reasons:

- We moved here for the schools and the existing school quality is what KEEPS us here. The current local Board of Education, Board of Finance committee and current quality education are all MAJOR reasons why we STAY in Connecticut. If the quality of our children's current education is negatively impacted or threatened, as it would be with these bills, it will not be worth us staying in this state.
- Local control is better control. The Canton Board of Education has effectively and responsibly managed its budget on a yearly basis resulting in high-achieving student outcomes, a vibrant school culture, strong financial accountability and high parent satisfaction. The Board of Education also works diligently with the Town and Board of Finance to provide the best education possible for its residents. They are always receptive to new ideas, opinions and criticism during the budget process (and throughout the year), always listening to the issues of the students and parents.
- School consolidation will erode the quality and the character of our local schools, which erodes the quality of our town. Our local voices have been a powerful force in shaping various educational issues over the years regarding everything to class sizes, kindergarten format, high school athletics and other school resources, as well as programs and resources that extend into our community, making it the tight-knit place that it is.
- School consolidation rips the heart out of small town life, which at its center are its schools. Generations of students attended Canton Schools, support its programs as adults and raise their own children in Canton. Its alumni are generous volunteers, business owners and civic leaders in the community. Canton High School athletic and musical events are the backbone of a vibrant cultural life in Canton.
- School consolidation means loss of unique & quality programs, classes and opportunities for students. Canton High School students, previously able to play on virtually "cut-free" teams, would be funneled into highly competitive regional teams, thus eliminating athletic opportunities for the majority of students. The same elimination of opportunities to participate in choral or instrumental groups, school musicals, and other extracurricular programs exists as students are consolidated into fewer and fewer campuses.
- Bigger schools are not better schools, as supported by national research. Bigger schools require more layers of administration and communication, which translate into headaches for students, teachers and parents. As stated in a report released by the National Education Policy Center, the "Consolidation of Schools and Districts: What the Research Says and What It Means" finds that the most dramatic effect of school & district consolidation is often on communities. "Put simply, the loss of a school erodes a community's social and economic base – its sense of community, identity and democracy – and the loss permanently diminishes the community itself, sometimes to the verge of abandonment." We can NOT afford to have this happen in Connecticut.

In closing, I hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools. We have happily made Canton our home for 11 years but will not hesitate to move out of state to safeguard the education, safety and future of our children.

Lindsey Thompson  
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