

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Jackie Tolkin. I am a first grade teacher in the Meriden Public Schools, and live in New Haven, having grown up in Milford, CT. I am writing to express my deep concerns about the bills being introduced into public hearing at the State Legislature: SB457 and SB738. I am gravely concerned about the consequences for all parties involved, and the potential negative ramifications that would arise from the passing of these bills. They would undoubtedly bring about larger class sizes - which are terrible for all students, not to mention those most at a disadvantage (poor, minorities). Teachers would be laid off - in an already strapped job market, this would be devastating for hundreds of teachers who are just trying to make a difference. As a state who needs to keep young people here, laying off the youngest of the work force (as we are wont to do in the public schools with our last in first out policies) would only push these teachers to move out of state, and into school districts who are hiring, bringing their families with them. Dismantling neighborhood schools has never been shown to do any town or municipality any good, and often leads to irreversible damage in impoverished areas. Finally, the cost saving benefits are a 'maybe' at best. Until the state legislature can provide fool-proof evidence that these measure will BOTH benefit students in well being and academic performance, and help the state save money (which this measure DOES NOT DO), we need to end it here.

Let's stop looking at the school systems as a scapegoat for savings and look a little more closely at balancing our budget, and finding funding elsewhere.

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*Jackie Tolkin*