

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Dear Education Committee,

As a parent of a second grader and a preschooler who are /will be attending Connecticut public schools, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization.

As a sister, daughter and grand-niece of public school teachers who have taught in both 'local' and 'regional' systems, I am very familiar with the associated outcomes of each style of public school education administration. Both published research and opinion of educators and parents support localized, smaller class-ratio school systems as the best choice for ALL students, regardless of location (city, suburban or rural) or socioeconomic status.

The main draw to Connecticut is the excellent public school system. There are less expensive options for housing in the Greater NYC (i.e. New Jersey, Westchester/Putnam County) and Hartford areas (i.e. Western Massachusetts). Given GE's move to Boston, the decline of the insurance industry in Hartford, and the stagnant hiring of CT based workers for other large corporations headquartered in Connecticut (ex. Most hiring due to organizational growth at United Technologies occurs in New York City, North Carolina or Florida), many of us, especially in Fairfield County, are stagnating in our careers or commuting longer distances to new positions outside of Connecticut, so our children have the opportunity to continue their education in the public school we have chosen for them. If you take away what is really keeping us here (the quality of education, small class sizes and localized decision making by people who live and work in our towns) there is no real reason to stay living (and paying taxes) in Connecticut.

As a Connecticut homeowner and tax payer, I am really struggling to understand why changing our current public school system to a forced regionalized state wide approach makes any sense, either fiscally or for the quality of education. People flock to Connecticut for the public schools; if they become regionalized via a mandate from the state, I fear that new families will stop moving to Connecticut and those of us who are currently taking advantage of the localized schools will move away as we have the means to do so. Connecticut is in a perilous economic situation and approaching this from a monetary lens, changing Connecticut's main "product" (i.e. its school system) to me means a loss of cash flow to Hartford via a well employed, large tax base.

For the reasons outlined above, 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.

Sincerely,

Lonnie deMarco

New Canaan, CT

