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Testimony regarding:

Proposed Bill 738, An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts.

I am strongly opposed to Proposed Bill 738, An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts.

The residents of Connecticut's towns have long enjoyed their autonomy. This proposal seeks to remove that autonomy. Part of the allure of this state has always been its small towns. The small-town school districts will be swallowed up by the larger cities.

No doubt the towns would have representation on the boards proportionate to their population. This will mean that the larger cities will dominate the smaller towns on the school boards. The large cities will control budgets, hiring of teachers, who goes to which schools, school construction etc. The small towns will lose our voices over how our children are educated, how our schools are run, and how our tax money is spent.

This is nothing more than a power and money grab by the large cities at the expense of the smaller towns. Years of mismanagement have put Connecticut's larger cities in dire financial straits. Hartford has been on the verge of bankruptcy. New Haven has had its bond rating lowered.

This state is itself a fiscal mess. The Legislature and the Governors have been lavishly spending for decades without regard to how they would pay for it. They promised overly generous pensions to state workers and then failed to properly fund them.

Now the bills are coming due and they are back to the trough for more tax money. The middle class is being squeezed dry while businesses and the wealthy are fleeing this state for more tax friendly states.

The problems inherent in the large cities would now be foisted upon the smaller suburban towns who are already struggling to maintain fiscal responsibility. It is not the responsibility of the suburbs to bail out the big cities that have engaged in fiscal irresponsibility for years.

Our property taxes are already high, we cannot afford the tax increases which will be inevitable if regionalization comes to pass. This will especially hurt residents who are on fixed incomes.

As a lifelong resident, I really love this state. I will be ready to retire in a few years and I don't know if I will be able to stay.

Richard Anderson