

February 27, 2019

Re: SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874

To Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and esteemed members of the Education Committee:

I submit to you, my written testimony, expressing my staunch opposition to SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874 which propose forced school district consolidation.

Unlike many of my Wilton neighbors, I am a Democrat. I'm an immigrant parent of 3 children, who is a full time working professional. My wife and I both have very stressful jobs that we worked hard to obtain in order to provide the best for our children. We both came from humble beginnings and were taught to work hard to be successful. We are still paying off school loans for good schools that we nor our parents were able to pay them off. We work hard to both payoff our school loans and mortgage and the much more expensive property taxes than our neighboring towns; our choice because of the school system in our town.

We ultimately decided to purchase a home in Wilton solely because of the strength of the school district. I cannot emphasize this enough. We bought a home in Wilton **because of the school district**. We wanted a small school, where the entire community is very involved in the way the school is run. There are many volunteering opportunities available and most of the time its first come first serve as many parents want to be this involved. We both work but find time by flexing working hours or taking days off to accomplish this. If we wanted to be part of a large district and be less involved, we would have moved to Greenwich, Stamford or Norwalk. But we choose Wilton for a reason.

As many if not all of my neighbors, regardless of their political affiliation, **I strongly oppose SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874**. The idea of regionalization is an irrational one, as it dilutes the community influence on the school and does not lead to efficiencies or cost reduction. Worse I believe it will degrade the education of my children and add 'red tape' to an already efficient running school. Both the Wilton Board of Ed and Norwalk Board of Ed oppose the idea of consolidation, as there is literature that demonstrates consolidation does not lead to efficiencies and/or cost reduction. West Virginia is a commonly referenced failure for consolidation. The point of democracy is that local people influence government. It is not that central government makes blanket decisions for an entire region without considering what its constituents really want.

In conclusion, if this or similar legislature passes, which forces Wilton Schools to consolidate with Norwalk Schools, I will regretfully no longer support the Democratic party. I have a strong history of supporting Democrats but you will no longer be able to count on my support or my neighbors.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Michal Balicki (Wilton CT)