

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

I am a Darien parent and I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874. These bills would harm, not help public education in Connecticut. Regionalizing our schools would have disastrous consequences. These bills would erode the strongest selling points we have as a state—small communities with good public schools. These bills would only hurt our schools and incentivize an additional outflow of residents, which, in turn, will only worsen the state of Connecticut’s fiscal crisis. We chose Darien **for the schools.**

Darien’s schools succeed for many reasons. With a smaller district, there is accountability. People know each other and that has an impact on children as students. Many teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators are local Wilton residents. A child seeing their parent interact with school staff outside of school because of church, clubs or activities is crucial. Those types of connections matter. Those types of connections show children what community is and encourage children to be a contributing member of their town as well.

As a parent of a student who requires Special Education, our local school district plays a large role in his success. He is not “cost in the crowd”. If these bills pass, this will have detrimental effects on students who require an IEP and Special Education forcing us to choose private education that we can not afford.

Additionally, parents play a tremendous role in the success of our schools. Darien parents get involved. The dedication, time and energy parents pour into our schools sends a strong message to our children that we care-- we care about them and their education. Creating large, regionalized districts would depersonalize our schools. These bills would diminish what Darien is as a small town. These bills would erode our community. So much of what makes the Darien school district successful will be diminished. Large districts will very quickly lead to poor achievement. If we have larger districts, I doubt parents be as willing to invest their time and energy into something that isn’t really “home”.

The claims that these bills would save money is patently false. Costs would be increased. Transportation costs alone would greatly increase. Managing large districts would require more administrators. More administrators means more salaries and more pensions. Regionalizing our schools would leave next to no incentive for young families to move into the state. Property values would further weaken. These bills would only cause additional harm to Connecticut’s declining population and real estate market and push Connecticut even deeper into the red. At a time when the cost of living continues to rise exponentially, I look to my local public schools as one of the few things I can point to and feel that we get what we pay for. In return for our tax dollars we are able to send our children to excellent, quality public schools. Take that away and there is little reason for families to be here. There is no merit in school regionalization.

Sincerely,

Beth Bonanno

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