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To Whom It May Concern:

As a parent of a public school student, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

I am a resident of New Hartford, as such, we already regionalize at the middle school and high school level. Our school is Northwest Region 7.

One of the reasons my husband and I moved to New Hartford 14 years ago, was the schools. The class sizes are small, the teachers are focused and involved with their students, and the administrators know the students as well. Re-sale value was an important factor in our decision is buying in New Hartford. Having a good school system is a huge factor for many people when deciding to buy a house. Many people have been moving into New Hartford over the past few years and they cite the school system as a driving factor.

The one plan that I have seen for regionalization is based on the probate court system. This would have New Hartford teaming up with Torrington, which is already a huge district and there has been much controversy in their dealings with Special Education students, in addition to Winsted (Winchester) which is under State Receivership. I am unclear how merging these schools together, in addition to the other schools that were mentioned in the bill will be a good idea.

As I have mentioned above, New Hartford already is regionalized at the middle school and high school level. Are we expected to have our youngest children, as young as 4 ride on a bus for over an hour to get to the school? As it is, my son, who is in 4th grade is on the bus for 50 minutes. Our school is only 2 ½ miles away.

What is the plan? Will this be yet, another unfunded state mandate left for the local districts to figure out? Who will decide where OUR children will go to school? It's not your children, it's OUR children. We, as parents and we as local tax payers know what is best for our children. We should be the ones to decide.

I understand that what you do is not an easy task. As a family, we need to live within a budget, we need to make sacrifices, but it seems the State Government does not.

I strongly oppose having our youngest students be forced into a regionalized system. Our older students are doing well with it. I am fine with that. I do not think we need to add another town to our mix.

Perhaps you need to spend some time in a public school and see what happens on a day to day basis. I am in the schools as a substitute teacher so I do know first-hand what it is like in our public schools. Our teachers in New Hartford give it their all, they have a supportive Board of Education and administration, and involved parents.

The demands are great for our youngest students and some are struggling. Since we in New Hartford, have smaller class sizes, our teachers are able to do their best with these students. I do not want to see the quality of our children's education suffer because the State needs to save some money and bring to us more mandates that creates a lot of pencil pushing and more stress.

Once again, I stress my opposition to SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Brett