

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to provide testimony on the proposed CT Senate bills, Bill 457 and Bill 738. I have been a CT resident for most of my life since I was three. I grew up in Tolland, and attended Tolland Public Schools from Kindergarten through my graduation in 1991. I have raised my children in East Haddam/Moodus, from the time my daughter, who is now a high school junior at Hale Ray High School in Moodus. My son, who is an 8th grader at Hale Ray Middle School, has lived his entire life in CT. I also was a math and science teacher for 17 years, and maintain my CT Certification to this day.

As someone who attended and non-regionalized town schools, and whose children have done the same, I know that to force regionalization of schools would be detrimental to our kids' education. By having a town school district, they can design the curriculum to support the special, unique needs of the students in the town. My daughter, who was diagnosed with High Functioning Autism 3 years ago, has blossomed at Hale Ray High School. This metamorphosis has been amazing, and I truly believe that it would never have happened in a regionalized school where a more traditional special education program was utilized.

Second, as a teacher in public schools, I realized that, although some regional school districts are not typical (i.e. RSD 4 in Deep River/Essex/Chester and RSD 18 in Lyme/Old Lyme), many of the larger districts (i.e. RSD 17 in Haddam-Killingworth, RSD 13 in Durham/Middlefield, and Hartford) consider and implement policies that are cost effective rather than beneficial to the students in the communities that the district serves. For example, the recent controversy in RSD 17, where the district has voted to close the Haddam Elementary School in Higganum, and sell the property for redevelopment, despite the wishes of the community, has pit the district administrations desire to make up money lost from the budgets of the past nine years against the population of the communities that they serve. In a local school district, the people of the community directly elect the members of the board of education, and if they institute policies that the community feels are detrimental, they have the option of voting them out in the next election cycle. In a regionalized district, smaller communities are at the whims of the larger towns in the district, and the policies implemented by the district ultimately benefit those larger towns, ignoring the smaller towns in the process.

The Constitution of the United States, upon which the Connecticut constitution is based, creates a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. This historic document was created to keep the people as a part of the government. It does not allow for a tyranny of the majority, which is what these bills will ultimately allow.

I am firmly in opposition to any *forced* regionalization of our school districts. Current regionalized districts did so for their own reasons. Many, if not all, of them allowed the members of their communities to vote for or against it. To force those towns that decided against it to do so would be completely against the wishes of the residents of those communities, and put the CT State Senate on the path of becoming as tyrannical as the British monarchy that we, the people of the United States, threw off of our backs in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence. I ask that neither of these bills be allowed to reach the floor of the CT General Assembly, and I hope that, if they do, that the representatives of the people of CT have enough desire to support their constituents, to vote against it.

Thank you for allowing for this voter to voice why these bills are bad for the people of Connecticut. I hope that those considering these proposals will be faithful to their oath of office, and vote against these bills from ever seeing the light of day.

David Cassenti  
East Haddam, CT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Cassenti". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a stylized "C".