

Members of the Education Committee, CT General Assembly,

I serve on a local Board of Education, as a RESC council representative and as a CAFE board member.

S.B. 738, the mandatory proposal to create school districts that grow the number of local education stakeholders in a district to 40,000 people is problematic for student outcomes.

The potential for gains in academic achievement is higher when there are small elementary schools. Students in small schools have more engaged parents, more consistent attendance, more teacher teamwork in identifying struggling learners and therefore more student support. Second, the potential for gains in educational achievement is lower for at-risk students when students attend large schools in a different location from their home community after the withering of local student support systems. Finally, the potential for leadership turnover within a consolidated district is high given sudden competing demands of 40,000 people without an additional investment to hire new support staff for micro-community engagement.

Legislative leaders need to quantify the benefit of cost savings in the form of property tax rate reductions for Connecticut residents of 72 small towns that could be considered for consolidation by a commission. Offsets to cost savings are inevitable in two areas: 1)transportation given the larger geographic area and 2)capital expenditures to have larger building capacity.

Better alternatives to regionalization are cooperating on contractual services, repurposing high schools for the delivery of career and technical education, and using Regional Education Service Centers to create customized solutions for two or more districts to lower expenditures.

Thanks for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Dayton