

Subject: **Regionalization Bills (SB 454/738), (SB 874), (SB 431 Sponsor)**

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senator Martin Looney's proposed Senate Bill 454/738, and the Governor's budget bill which also speaks to regionalization (SB 874).

While there are many important reasons to oppose the concept of forced regionalization, including potential degradation of education quality, and concerns about property values, there is no empirical evidence to validate that such a move actually leads to cost savings. In fact, research has concluded that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated" and that district consolidation may actually create negative impacts.

This Bill will eliminate local control and the larger scale and differing priorities could lead to a decline in the quality of our schools. This is particularly concerning to a district which is annually recognized among the top 1% of all school districts in the nation. The mere existence of this Bill is already dissuading potential homebuyers from considering my town as a wonderful place to raise a family.

I am also vehemently opposed to Governor's proposal to require municipalities to fund a portion of teacher pension costs. Rather than adequately fund the plan they created, and despite the fact that this crisis has been growing for years, our state leaders are now trying to shift the burden to local municipalities that have responsibly managed their finances.

Additionally, the Governor's plan also calls for a surcharge for towns that pay teacher salaries that exceed the state median. The plan does not account for higher costs of living in areas such as Fairfield County, or the impact of binding arbitration, two factors beyond local control that strongly influence salary agreements.

Another significant concern is Bill SB 431 which proposes to divert motor vehicle tax revenue from municipalities to the state government.

The cumulative effect of these proposals, if enacted, would be millions of dollars in additional obligations for the residents of my town. This would likely result in increased property taxes for a diminished, regionalized school system – and a major financial burden to all residents.

CT legislators face the task of addressing the state's precarious financial situation and as you do, I ask you to represent my voice and those of anyone who has written in opposition to these bills. I strenuously object the idea of forced regionalization and ask that you keep them from progressing any further.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Dempster  
Wilton