

My name is Meg Donahue of Wilton, Connecticut and I am writing to inform you that we gravely opposed Bill numbers SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874. Our family moved to Wilton in 2013. We were residents of Norwalk when our oldest child turned five and we knew that we were looking for more than the Norwalk School District could offer us. We loved our home, our street and our neighbors so this was a very difficult decision. We looked at many towns in the area: New Canaan, Darien, Ridgefield, Weston and then there was Wilton. It was everything we were looking for. People who cared so deeply about the school system, a small town filled with kind people who didn't seem to have the 'Fairfield County Snobbery' that exists in so many other towns. What we loved so much was that Wilton only had ONE school district. No matter where you live in Wilton, your children all go to school together, this is amazing and so hard to find! No matter who you are in Wilton EVERY person wants YOUR child to do well, it is such a strong community here. When we made the transition from Norwalk to Wilton, we moved into a home that was half the space with higher taxes than our house in Norwalk. Four people in 1,000 square feet has proved to have many challenges but we always said it was worth it to be here for the schools.

One day I was jogging on a Saturday morning and I ran past one of the soccer fields where many people waved good morning. I continued through the Wilton section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail where several people were walking their dogs, jogging or just reading by the water. I continued back through town where there was a musician playing jazz on Schenck's Island while others were playing chess. I came back home while my husband and kids were having breakfast and when Steve asked how my run was, I just smiled and said "I love this town". What I want you to understand is that this town is special. It is not made up of one type of person, it is made up of different interests, backgrounds, talents and ideas. We have a Democrat vs. Republican softball game every year. We love to hear each other's views and we love a spirited debate. Wilton is so unique and the best way I can describe it (please forgive my slang) that Wilton is made up of different, funky people who all love one thing - our school system.

When we read about the proposed bill that would combine our school district with Norwalk, we were heartbroken. The fabric of this town is made from the school system. By taking that away, you would be destroying all that Wilton is. Families move here for the schools and end up living here as adults to raise the next generation because they want to give them the amazing experiences they had growing up. Not only is this what makes Wilton special, this is what makes Connecticut so amazing, that there are small towns like Wilton for people to reside in. With the proposed bill you would be taking this all away from my kids and their kids someday.

I unfortunately have experience with bussing/district combining. I grew up in Quincy, Massachusetts in the 1980's right next door to Boston where the tragedy of bussing was playing out in our lives. Many of my friends were forced out of their homes in their tight knit community of South Boston. They could no longer go to their elementary school down the street and were forced to commute an hour across town. That is quite similar to the distance between North Wilton and South Norwalk. I'll spare you the details of horror and violence that gave their parents no choice but to flee their homes in search of a better life for their families. This is what you would be doing to the families of Wilton. You can ask any family in Wilton why they are here and I feel comfortable guaranteeing you that their response would be 'the schools'. By combining school districts with Norwalk you would be forcing us out of our homes and out of our town in search of a better life for our kids.

You have a very difficult decision here. One of the hardest things in life is to question your leaders, but as a leader yourself I implore you to do what is right and save our town. You can save a town that has history, culture, pride in its diversity, it is a place where leaders are made. I understand that Senator Looney is looking to “create a more efficient educational system.” I am all for that idea, but I promise you this is not the way. Won't you please end these destructive bills and save our town?

Sincerely,

Meg Donahue