

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

As a resident of the town of Burlington and an educator in Regional School district #10, I am asking you not to pass the aforementioned bills. In certain circumstances, I support school regionalization, however, I do not support forced regionalization which can be based mainly on finances rather than what is best for children. There is no evidence supporting its success in New England states. If you review the history of the state of Maine, you will see that forced regionalization led to more conflict than successes. Ten years later, acknowledging this legislative failure, Maine is now focused on an incentive-based system for regionalization.

After studying regionalization, the Center for American Progress concluded that, “States should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to maximizing school and district size. While our report finds that many districts suffer from lost potential capacity due to their small size, there is no easy solution to this problem, and the best solution for one district may not be the best solution for another. What’s clear is that state-led consolidation is neither the only option nor the right solution in many cases.”

Here are other concerns I have related to the three bills:

- These bills would force regionalization on schools that are already providing high quality education at a reasonable cost.
- Another concern is the potential increase in travel time for students in the outlying areas of the region.
- The Brookings Papers on Education Policy found that there is little evidence that large school districts produce better educational outcomes and more evidence that large districts are generally detrimental to educational outcomes. Creating overly large new regionalized districts as outlined in proposal SB738 is likely to have negative effects on education.
- The Governor’s bill calls for forcing shared superintendents. In 1999, a report from the New Jersey Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization concluded that, “Sharing administrative services doesn’t necessarily cut costs, because as personnel begin to take on region-wide responsibilities, it often becomes necessary to hire more staff to support them.”
- The state should not be denying our children any ECS funds they deserve due to political agendas.

While I admire the legislature's desire to provide the highest quality education at a reasonable cost, these bills are not the solution to the existing problems that some of our small towns are facing.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I’m happy to answer any questions you may have.

***Mary Jane Dunn
1 Fox Glenn Road
Burlington, CT 06013***