

February 25, 2019

To my Connecticut representatives and members of the committee:

As a parent of public school students, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools, or any attempt to penalize public schools for NOT regionalizing.

We moved here for the schools, and existing school quality is what keeps us here. None of these bills includes even one mention of school quality.

In much of the supposed research on this issue, there is a lack of evidence that this kind of regionalization or "consolidation" leads to cost savings or efficiencies. In fact, some information suggests consolidation models can more often create negative results including higher transportation costs. In a Policy Brief by NEPC (National Education Policy Center), researchers at Ohio University caution policymakers in their attempts to consolidate districts, encouraging them to do the following:

- Closely question claims about presumed benefits of consolidation in their state. What reason is there to expect substantial improvements, given that current research suggests that savings for taxpayers, fiscal efficiencies, and curricular improvements are unlikely?
- Avoid statewide mandates for consolidation and steer clear of minimum sizes for schools and districts. These always prove arbitrary and often prove unworkable.
- Consider other measures to improve fiscal efficiency or educational services. Examples include cooperative purchasing agreements among districts, combined financial services, enhanced roles for Educational Service Agencies, state regulations that take account of the needs of small districts and schools, recruitment and retention of experienced teachers for low-wealth districts, distance learning options for advanced subjects in small rural schools, smaller class sizes for young students, and effective professional development programs.
(NEPC, 2011)

Newtown is already working alongside other neighboring districts to create efficiencies that can lead to realized cost savings, including shared transportation for out-of-district students, consortiums for purchasing, and exploring options for shared alternative and special education programming.

There is already a problem getting people to move to Connecticut because of the high cost of living here. The quality of schools is one of the few things that actually draws people here, and forced regionalization would not only discourage people from choosing to live in Connecticut, it would actually drive current residents to leave. Connecticut's economy would suffer greatly!

I want you to oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Sincerely,



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