

February 27, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the regionalization bill, or any bill that proposes regionalization by force. I am currently referring to the proposed S.B. 738, S.B. 457 and Governor's Bill #874. I am a mom, and I am also a public educator. The district I teach in will most likely not be affected by this, but the district I live in will. It is a small, mostly blue collar town where people look out for each other. I love my little town and our little school, and I feel that my son will become a contributing member to our society one day. This is largely in part to the community feeling that we have. That is now in jeopardy, but I won't let it go without a fight.

I have been a teacher for over 20 years and have much experience with many different facets of education. I have been in Title 1 schools and affluent schools. I now work in a school where I have students who live in a shelter sitting next to students who live in a million dollar home. I know all too well about large schools and school districts. My school has 750 kids for only 5th and 6th grade. It often feels impersonal, and I know that kids are more apt to get lost in the shuffle and slip through the cracks. I've seen it happen. The less we know of the faces and names of the people in power in our districts, the less personal it is, and the less we connect. Making connections are vital for kids, parents, administrators and teachers alike.

In this regionalization idea, how many educators and parents in the towns affected have you talked to? How many classrooms or homes have you visited? How much hands-on, in-person research have you done? We're the experts of our domains. Educators and community members have the intel. Use us! Talk to us! Ask us! We are happy to tell our side...especially educators. They need to be heard because they know what you don't. Current educators are the research you pay to get from books written by psychologists who stepped in schools for brief periods. You have been our governor for a hot second and you want to revamp so vigorously. Does a politician step in to take over heart surgery, especially without the advice or training of a heart surgeon? Does a politician jump in and fix the car that a mechanic is trying to piece together without training or years spent with their hands dirty? Does a politician take over a restaurant without culinary skills? The answer is NO. Why? The answer is because they are trained experts in their field who have the experience that you don't. The same concept applies here.

It is so difficult to reach kids with the obstacles that keep getting put in our path by people who don't fully understand what is needed, or have his/her own agendas. Creating larger districts make kids into numbers over names. It makes them into data over human beings. It creates a divide when we so desperately need to unite. I see the news stories, I follow social media, I know the repercussions of losing that small town essence that is being ripped away in this bill. We need to get back to being a village. We need to find more humanity. We need community. Your bill threatens that and takes us in the wrong direction.

I care deeply about my child's education: academically, socially and emotionally. My husband and I thought long and hard and painstakingly chose our home with all of this in mind. We are tireless contributors to our society as a teacher, coach, little league board member, mentor to many kids and a giver of all that we have left emotionally and monetarily. You want to change our town that we tirelessly support, yet I've never seen you in it. I invite any one or all of you to visit my town. I will be happy to host you and answer any questions you may have.

We have huge issues in education; from social and emotional well-being, to standards of behavior going by the wayside, to academic importance and appropriateness. We are failing our kids because our focus is always on the money, the power, and who is right or wrong politically. Our kids are getting caught in the crossfire, literally and figuratively. Can we please take a breath and ask the educators and community members what they need...what will work...how to solve our problems? You may be surprised at the positive ways we can help you. We should be a team. When a major first act as governor has the word "forced" attached to it, you lose the respect of many. We live in a democracy. You are a democratic leader. Please let that be what you stand for. Please hear my voice and all of the others who aren't going to allow you to force our children to become faceless, nameless numbers on a spreadsheet.

In closing, I strongly oppose the regionalization act and ask that you please consider other options. Please, stop and listen and take a moment to do more research that goes beyond the almighty dollar. Our kids are more than a price tag...they are our tomorrow.

Sincerely,  
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