

Re: SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and esteemed members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 454/738 and SB 874.

As parents of a public school student, We are strongly opposed to the proposals regarding school regionalization as put forth in three proposed regionalization bills, including Senator Martin Looney's Senate Bill 454/738, An Act Concerning the Size of School Districts (SB 457) and the Governor's budget bill which also speaks to regionalization (SB 874), and Governor Lamont's proposal to shift even more of the state's financial obligations to Weston and other municipalities (the last being the subject of another hearing and related testimony).

We note that 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 by the National Education Policy Center concluded that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated." Further, an article in Education Finance and Policy suggested that district consolidation may actually create negative impacts such as higher transportation costs, a "leveling up" of salaries, and more negative attitudes among staff members and parents. The same study suggests that financial benefits may be found only when consolidation of very small districts (fewer than 300 to 1000 students) occurs.

We moved to Connecticut because of the fine reputation of the public schools, particularly selecting Weston, even with its higher taxes on homeowners due to a small commercial tax base. The continuing quality is what has kept us here for the entire K-12 education experience. None of these bills mention any aspect of school quality, which concerns us greatly. Connecticut is already facing an exodus of its population as it ages due to the poor management in the past of state affairs, these bills will further serve to have a negative impact on Connecticut's economy and population as people with school age children choose other states where they have certainty with regard to the payments (taxes) they will be required to make and how those funds are used for schools their children will attend.

We hope you will join us and oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874 and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools, including those that penalize districts for exercising their right to remain local school districts.

Thank you again for hearing our testimony. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Russell and Theresa Golden

Weston, CT