

February 28, 2019

To the Members of the Education Committee:

We are longtime Connecticut residents with children who attended Connecticut public schools. We've paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes to the State and vote across party lines. **We oppose the following three bills regarding "regionalization" of school districts -- SB 874, SB 738 and SB 457.**

**Here is why:**

1. Everyone we know is clinging desperately to the belief that our county's reputation as a haven for young families, our property values, and our enthusiasm for Connecticut's future, will somehow be restored. And so, we personally, and Fairfield County as a whole, are at a tipping point. Any further law or initiative by Hartford that is perceived to either: tax our town to fix the State's problems or erode Fairfield County's appeal to young families will compel people like us to take our losses and leave.

2. We've heard the Governor wants the law to be about offering "carrots." Offering incentives for participation is the same thing as punishing towns whose participation is politically infeasible and economically self-destructive. Those incentives are being served from a pie that needs to be shared by all, with every bill proposed in Hartford seemingly designed to reduce our town's share of the pie.

3. The lifeblood of Wilton is the perceived quality of its schools. It doesn't matter whether a law calls for sharing administrative resources or buildings - the perception is what matters, and the perception is the same: Hartford is making it harder or impossible for towns like Wilton to stay afloat and maintain the quality of its schools. No public relations campaign or political spin will change that perception of these bills.

4. We agree more needs to be done to improve our cities and address the State's woeful fiscal problems. But this cannot be achieved by impairing the growth and reputations of Fairfield County towns. This requires a long-term plan that makes sense to the majority of residents of both poor and rich communities, and equally important, one that inspires young people and businesses considering a future in Connecticut. The proposed bills, unfortunately, will do the exact opposite.

**We urge 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,

**Victoria & Gary Hirsch  
Wilton, CT**