

Joseph and Gail Hurley
24 Marvin Ridge Place
Wilton, CT 06897

February 28, 2019

Attn: edtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Subject: Opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874

Dear Education Committee Members,

As parents of public-school students, we strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools. They don't improve our kids' education or save taxpayers any money. They harm our communities and particularly hurt disadvantaged students. They undermine the voices of parents and teachers within our local schools.

We moved to Wilton, Connecticut in 2014 from New Jersey specifically for Wilton's very highly ranked state and national school system. If any of the proposed bills are implemented, we will move out of Connecticut along with our top-tax bracket earnings.

Our family opposes these bills based on research that shows regionalization does not improve the quality of the education or actually improve town and municipalities' already stretched budgets. The most cost-effective districts have fewer than 5,000 students. Many of Connecticut's large districts such as Hartford, New Haven and Stamford have high costs while many of our small districts have average or low costs. Trivial cost reductions from regionalization would come from savings in the smallest districts. However, that represents such a small fraction of the state's education spending that the benefits would be offset by implementation costs.

Furthermore, none of these bills include any mention of the quality of the school for our children and the harm it will do to the character of the local schools. The best overall academic achievements are in elementary schools with fewer than 500 students and high schools with fewer than 1,000. Regionalized schools have longer commutes, they have less parent volunteering and extracurricular participation and they have more truancy and dropouts.

Finally, these bills damage property values. That, in turn, harms our tax bases. They would make it harder to attract new taxpayers and businesses. I have spoken to multiple real estate professionals who are already seeing potential buyers halt their home searches in Wilton and other Connecticut towns, including anecdotes of buyers walking away without closing.

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

Sincerely,

Joseph and Gail Hurley