

Re: Testimony regarding SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874

Matthew Kupersmith, New Canaan, CT

February 27, 2019

To whom it may concern,

I am a resident of New Canaan with three small children. I moved to Connecticut and to New Canaan specifically because the school system provides a world-class education and helps to instill a sense of community. However, I have grave fears that forcing towns to relinquish control of the educational system to some super-regional body would adversely impact the educational efficacy of our schools. I have reviewed the text of SB 457, SB 738, and SB 874. 'Efficiency' listed as the primary goal and is peppered throughout these proposed bills. The Governor's bill requires districts to draw up reports that review the economic cost/benefit of regionalization. Nowhere do I see a higher level of educational excellence among the goals of the legislation. This is incredibly troublesome, especially given that the New Canaan Board of Education specifically embraces educational excellence as a key goal of its budgets every year. The residents of New Canaan, our administrators, and our teachers form a tight-knit community with common goals of educational excellence and shared citizenship. I do not believe that we have a shared set of priorities and values with those who are promoting these bills at the state level. Please, please do not upend this community and others around the state like ours!

Legislators should be open and honest with themselves and their constituents about the real goal of these bills...redistribution of property tax dollars; however, this redistribution initiative is unlike a progressive income tax, which reasonable people can debate. These proposals have the potential to victimize the children who are enrolled or will be enrolled in some of Connecticut's (and the nation's) best-performing school districts. The legislators who stand behind these proposals should be ashamed of themselves for their willingness to sacrifice the educational experience of children statewide in order to claim victory for some sort of economic grab to constituents in a small number of large cities.

Some claim that these bills have been proposed in order to promote greater administrative efficiency and lower administrative cost. That argument does not hold water, as district-wide executive administration represents a small part of the overall cost of delivering education. Furthermore, I suspect that district-wide administrative cost is actually a greater percentage of education budgets in large districts than they are in smaller districts, proving that larger is often less efficient. As a professional with two decades of business experience, I can attest to the fact that mergers often fail to produce the desired cost reductions. In fact, mergers often result in significantly greater costs and a cascade of unintended negative consequences. Any legislator who votes in favor of these bills is knowingly making the statement that he or she is willing to 'roll the dice' with our children's education in the face of clear warnings that it is the children who are likely to be adversely impacted.

The idea of allowing rural or other districts to *voluntarily* enter into arrangements involving shared resources should certainly be explored in order to further the goal of improved educational outcomes for all students. However, the very notion that a state government would *force* structural change upon some of the best performing school districts in the country in the face of widespread protest is hard to even comprehend. It is a nonsensical over-reach of power and if it comes to it, I would

hope that state constitutional lawyers will challenge this oppression of our small community. It doesn't need to come to that, please do the right thing and allow our community to continue to support our children.