

Opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874

I am part of the nearly unanimous opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 among Connecticut's public school parents. 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.

SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 don't improve our children's education.

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. They have more truancy and dropouts.

SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 don't save taxpayers money.

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.

SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 hurt our communities...

These bills damage property values. That, in turn, harms our tax bases. They would make it harder to attract new taxpayers and businesses.

... In fact they already are hurting our communities.

The lack of clarity in these bills is already creating market confusion that discourages new families from moving to Connecticut and encourages existing families to leave. The specter of uncertainty hanging over Connecticut will continue damaging home values while these bills are considered and, subsequently, would continue their damage while families await the judgement of a government commission. The commission would operate with a rushed timeline and inadequate participation from the regions with the best schools.

SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 hurt disadvantaged students the most.

At-risk students do better in smaller school districts. The optimal school size for disadvantaged students is elementary schools up to 300 students and high schools up to 600. Regionalization risks throwing them into environments where they are less likely to thrive. These are the students most likely to miss class and ultimately drop out of larger districts. Larger districts are less connected with their local communities. Teachers are less involved. It is that teacher involvement that can make the difference between success and failure for disadvantaged students.

One size fits none.

Regionalization does not work – it failed in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont and it would fail in Connecticut. Regionalization's high failure rate has been well documented in *Improving Educational Opportunity and Equity through School District Consolidation in Maine*, *A Cost-Benefit Analysis of School Regionalization in Massachusetts*, and *Vermont School District Consolidation Case*

Study. All of the above facts are available in K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut: Pros, Cons and Surprises. Unambiguously rejecting SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 would save Connecticut from a fiscal, educational, and economic mistake that others have made but we can still avoid.

Hands Off Our Schools

Rejection would protect parents and teachers who want to maintain our strong voices within our local communities. Those voices have joined together to say “Hands Off Our Schools” in a growing movement made up of thousands upon thousands of families from every region of Connecticut, every background, and every walk of life. We are united by a desire to protect our local schools from the threats of SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874. We want to defeat these bills and then defeat the politicians who support them. Why? Because we just want what’s best for our kids.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Alexander M. Levy

Wilton, CT Resident with two children in the Public School System