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TESTIMONY OF HOUSTON PUTNAM LOWRY IN OPPOSITION TO RSB: 738 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This testimony is submitted in opposition to RSB: 738 – An Act Concerning The Creation Of Regional School Districts.¹ I have submitted testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly regularly since the mid-1980s. While I have been an elected member of the Avon Board of Education for more than a decade, I am speaking in my personal capacity.

There is an unspoken assumption large school districts are more “efficient” than smaller school districts. That assumption is simply wrong. Each school district is run by the local Board of Education as their local constituents require. There is no reason to study an idea that will never be implemented.

The Town of Avon provides an excellent education to its residents (and nearly 4% of CHOICE students enrolled in our school system). A table shows our population and per student expenditures (and of our neighboring towns)²

Town	Population	Per student \$
Avon	18,352	\$17,184.00
Canton	10,298	\$16,860.00
Farmington	25,572	\$16,576.00
Regional District 10	15,092	\$15,094.00
Simsbury	24,952	\$17,146.00

Harwinton and Burlington formed Regional School District 10 in 1962. While this was the right solution for them, it is not the right solution for the other towns.

The cities of Hartford and New Haven spent \$19,616 and \$18,381 per student in 2018 respectively and I think Avon gets better results (however you define results). Avon spends less than half the \$35,155 per student that Cornwall spends and I still think Avon gets better results

¹ As of the time this testimony is being submitted on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, 282 pieces of written testimony have been submitted in opposition to this bill and none have been submitted in favor. That would seem to suggest near universal local opposition.

² Data from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/spending/per-student>

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than Cornwall. That is due to the hard work of the Avon Board of Education, our teachers, our students and our parents.

There is no doubt Avon is a smaller school district. I would hate to dilute our academic excellence by unnecessarily forcing us to merge with other school districts (Avon has 18,352 residents as of 2017, far below the 40,000 resident threshold for this bill). Local control of public education is a 350 year old tradition in Connecticut. That tradition should not be changed, unless it is done at a local level.

I request the Education Committee **NOT** report this bill to the General Assembly.