

TESTIMONY from Mary Lydon
Public Hearing March 1, 2019-Education Committee

IN OPPOSITION TO S.B. 874: An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut

IN OPPOSITION TO S.B. 738: An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts

IN OPPOSITION TO S.B. 457: An Act Concerning the Size of School Districts

As a parent of one graduate and two current CT public school students, I strongly oppose S.B. 874, S.B. 738 and S.B. 457, three legislative bills that have been written to further promote school regionalization in our state. I also strongly oppose any future bills proposed to force regionalization upon CT school districts.

Our family moved to New Canaan for the schools. Continuous school quality is what has kept us both in the public school system and in CT. Small, regional school districts, where teachers and administrators know students and parents personally, are the foundation of the building stones needed to educate and prepare CT children for college and beyond, giving CT school children the necessary tools to thrive and contribute to society for decades to come. Small districts have the flexibility to educate each child individually and enable every child, regardless of ability and interest to succeed.

In New Canaan, student and parent engagement-a key factor in the success of the New Canaan school district-will undoubtedly decline if the schools are regionalized. The unique qualities of our school district will disappear, and with it, one of the foremost reasons families move to CT.

There is no evidence that regionalization will save money for the state in the long term. A 2017 study by the National Education Policy Center concluded that benefits from school regionalization are "vastly overestimated". In 2017, the National Conference on State Legislation in School and District Consolidation wrote, "Larger districts can also tend to have higher administrative costs.....it often becomes more necessary to hire more staff to support regional positions. This creates new levels of administration. Additionally, the new regional responsibilities may result in a need for higher compensation for regional administrators to avoid a decrease in job performance."

The State of CT already suffers from a decline in our tax base as many businesses have decided to leave to seek more favorable working situations as offered in other states. Regionalization of school districts would exacerbate the decline as many families will leave to seek out higher quality, local school districts in neighboring states.

I oppose S.B. 874, S.B. 738 and S.B. 457 and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of CT public schools and hope you will, too. Thank you for reading my testimony.

Respectfully, Mary Lydon, New Canaan, CT