

S.B. 457, An Act Concerning the Size of School Districts
S.B. 738, An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts
S.B. 874, An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on SB 457, SB 738 and SB 874.

My name is Chris Major, and I live in Wilton. I request that the legislature reject these three bills which seek to impose school regionalization on us.

I have resided in Connecticut since moving here for law school in 1998. My wife joined me in Stamford when we were married in 2004, and in 2008 we purchased our home in Wilton. We purchased our home in Wilton so we could send our children to the excellent schools. We have a third grader, a second grader, and in the fall our youngest will start kindergarten. Obviously, we are heavily invested in the Wilton schools and hope to be for years to come.

My wife and I both work in New York where the economy is stronger and the opportunities are greater. Our extended families live in New York. Since purchasing our home in Wilton, we have witnessed a consistent decline in our home's value, and increases to the myriad property, income and consumption taxes and surcharges we pay. Had we purchased a similarly priced home in New York it would be worth more today than when we purchased it. But our home in Wilton is worth significantly less than the price we paid more than a decade ago, despite significant efforts to improve our home. Connecticut's economy and fiscal outlook are worrisome. The population is shrinking. Metro North is massively expensive and slow.

I long ago accepted the fact that living in Connecticut is not a smart economic decision. But I have still been able to easily justify our poor economic decision because we are able to send our three children to the Wilton schools and live in a tight-knit community that is fostered by those schools. My wife is a school teacher in Westchester County, and she has been exceedingly happy with the Wilton schools. That keeps us here.

If this one drawing card is taken away from us through forced regionalization, or if the Governor's Bill succeeds and casts the threat of forced regionalization over our community for the years to come, our home value will plummet further. Most importantly, our children's education will be needlessly jeopardized. We will have no choice but to sell our home at a large loss so we can move to a state and a community where education is valued and not under attack.

Connecticut's best assets are its relative proximity to New York and its schools. There is no persuasive data that forced regionalization would actually save money. And the proponents do not even bother claiming that it would improve the schools. From the state's perspective, it would be counterproductive to inflict damage on one of its few well-functioning assets and drawing cards. How can the state attract younger workers if the best school districts are under threat of forced regionalization?

If the legislature will not act in my family's interest, I hope it will at least act in its own self-interest and protect one of the few effective drawing cards for luring and retaining taxpayers in Connecticut.

Thank you again for hearing my testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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