

Education Committee Public Hearing
Friday, March 1st, 2019 1:00pm Rm 2E LOB

Testimony of proposed S.B. bill #738

My name is Shana McPherson, I am a resident of New Hartford and mother to three small children in the New Hartford public school system. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of myself and many other New Hartford residents that have concerns regarding proposed bill S.B. #738. While this bill has seemingly good intentions to offer some districts, who need resources and special services, it will be exhausting to school systems such as New Hartford and Regional #7.

Two of my three children are on the Autism Spectrum. We moved from Farmington to New Hartford because of the school system. While Farmington is a great school system and we received wonderful services, my older son became a number due to the size of the school system. When there are too many typical children in a school system, special needs children get pushed into special education classrooms far too often. The time spent in mainstream classrooms with typical peers is crucial to the development of kids with special needs, especially Autism. Children with Autism learn by example. Adding two large, school systems that have exhausted their services will hurt our kids both typical and special needs. Even if we are only to share services with these added school systems, there will be many kids in our system that will lose services because we will be filling in gaps for these other school systems. I have knowledge of what is going on in these surrounding towns with their services and it is not a good situation. While I feel for those children, we cannot put our own children at risk of losing what they already have in place. If we must redistrict children and we end up sharing schools as well, there will be too much time spent en route to school, the classrooms will be too large, and I fear this will push our special needs kids into special education classrooms with less typical peer interaction. With Autism being so prevalent, we must be aware of how we are educating these kids. We must make sure they are learning from their peers. This is so important for not only their future but also for the future of our typical children and the acceptance of those with Autism. They are our future just as much as any typical child. We must make sure that our children are all getting the proper services and education they need in order to be properly functioning adults in the very near future.

While I understand that some restructure of some Connecticut school systems may be necessary for towns to receive more resources, I think we should take a long look at budgets and typical to special needs student ratios before making these decisions. This is something that I feel strongly about as these children are our future. I hope to be of assistance in this process and I thank you for the opportunity to be heard.