

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

As a teacher in an urban school (Stamford) and a parent of children in Wilton's school system, I am opposed to forced regionalization of school districts of any form (Bills 457, 738 and any other bills that ask for the forced regionalization of schools). I agree it is important for a distribution of wealth. But this already occurs and most of the tax revenue from Fairfield County goes to the other side of the state. I have also devoted my life to teaching and chose an urban school as those children deserve good teachers too. With my Ph.D. in biochemistry, I could very easily have a job in any suburban school district with the accompanying higher salary. My family has chosen Wilton to be our home based upon the school district performance. This proposal makes this an unknown variable.

Most transitions do not go smoothly unless all wrinkles are ironed out. As there would be many wrinkles to iron out (the entire structure of the curricula, teacher's locations schools) and all history of forced regionalization and bussing kids into other schools has been a colossal failure, I am not hopeful. In addition, larger school districts typically have lower performance – melding our small school system with Norwalk's would make a Norwalk's massive school system even larger and probably lead to diminished academic returns

What about the teacher contracts. Thankfully, this proposal would not change my status as a teacher since Stamford school system is too large already, but what about the town I live in? Would teacher salaries of Norwalk go up – and become a major burden on the tax base – this would not lead to any cost savings (the reason for this proposal). Or would teacher salaries go down in Wilton – effectively slashing of salaries? I can foresee some very experienced teachers leaving the school and going into districts that will not be paired with city schools to have higher salaries (or going across the border to New York schools).

In addition, I can foresee our property values dropping, as property values are closely tied to school district performance. I have worked very hard, scrimped and saved to make certain my children are in a top school district. This would abolish EVERYTHING I have saved for to provide for my children. And with our property values dropping, we would then be unable to afford to move to a “better” school district that is not becoming a massive behemoth.

Mind you I have already given my life's work to disadvantaged children. I chose to work in Stamford at Westhill High. Now the state wants to take everything else away from me that I hold dear. And for what, I ask – so a superintendent position can be eliminated (and 3 deputy superintendent jobs created)? I see no cost savings in any of these plans – just a total destruction of the school systems that are currently successful.

I beg you to please vote no to any and all forced regionalization of schools. Make it optional for districts. It is very difficult to undo these types of changes and return Connecticut back to the excellence in schools we currently have.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Migiano