

**Testimony Regarding Bill Nos. SB457, SB738, and SB874
(Mandatory Regional School Districts)**

I write this testimony in response to the proposed bills that have come forth regarding 'Mandatory Regional School Districts' here in Connecticut.

As the Superintendent of Schools in East Lyme, Connecticut, our district and Board of Education have been focused for many years on engaging in opportunities to regionalize with neighboring towns across Southeastern Connecticut. Shared service opportunities are always looked upon as favorable when they present themselves as cost saving measures and improve the quality of educational opportunities for students. East Lyme as well as many other districts across our region are focused on always looking for efficiencies. These regional opportunities and practices manifest through shared business operations, facility management, student transportation, human resources, special education services, professional development, technology, and other educational programming.

In East Lyme, we currently share all aspects of insurance (medical, liability, workers compensation, etc.) with our town. We engage in professional learning opportunities and trainings with many other districts. We also share special education transportation services to reduce costs for students in out-placed school settings. Additionally, given recent changes in the law around student expulsion, we are collaborating with the Waterford Public Schools on an alternative student placement. Rather than paying for our own costly and full-time program, which would require the hiring of an additional full-time teacher, we are sending a student to an established Waterford program at a fraction of the cost.

One of the most important regional efforts that East Lyme has engaged in has been a cooperative agreement with Salem Public Schools. For multiple years, Salem has sent 9th – 12th grade students to East Lyme High School. This has been a fantastic partnership, and we recently approved another 20-year agreement. Any mandated regionalism could disrupt this excellent partnership and wreak havoc on our educational and transitional programming that is in place between our two towns.

In closing, I would like to mention that other states have tried mandated regionalism and have not seen the fiscal savings that were projected. I have also read and heard that some states are moving away from this forced practice. There is no conclusive evidence that I have viewed that shows a mandate of this nature will benefit children.

Forced regionalism will not improve our fiscal climate in East Lyme. Allowing us to maintain and improve our own regional collaborative efforts and shared services will provide ongoing opportunities to identify further cost saving measures. This will also allow us to improve educational opportunities for all students across our great state.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey R. Newton
Superintendent of Schools
East Lyme Public Schools
East Lyme, Connecticut