

27th February, 2019

To the Education Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any forced school redistricting, including the three options explored by **Senate Bill 457 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS** , **Senate Bill 738 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS**, and **Governor's Bill SB 874 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT** .

My town of Old Lyme is already part of Regional District 18, with our neighboring town of Lyme. The two towns share a history, similar governmental style, and educational priorities. Region 18 has shown prudence in seeking efficiencies with nearby districts for various services, such as sports facilities and coaching. But these shared relationships were achieved in a natural, organic manner that all parties agreed to. Region 18 also accepts tuition students from other districts, and is consistently ranked as one of the best in the state.

The redistricting map proposed under SB 738 would tear apart Region 18, sending Lyme students *across the Connecticut River* to regionalize with Saybrook, Haddam, Chester, Essex, Westbrook and Deep River. Has there been any thought given to the idea of running buses across the Baldwin Bridge in icy conditions, or how the numerous traffic accidents on and around the bridge would affect this commute? Clearly not. Meanwhile, Old Lyme students would be forced to regionalize with East Lyme, Salem and Montville— which are at least a half hour away from some parts of town. This would result in students spending more time commuting and less in the classroom. This is an inefficient use of time and resources that does not consider the rural nature of the area, or the best interest of the children.

Lyme and Old Lyme have a long history of prudently stewarding their resources, while being recognized for the quality of their educational system dating back to the 17th century. To have Hartford step in with the heavy hand of state and mandate that the high-performing district of Lyme-Old Lyme regionalize further is an outrageous overreach. Connecticut was founded on the principle of direct democracy: one person, one vote. The small town Selectperson system as evidenced in Lyme and Old Lyme continues this tradition to this day. Towns must be left alone to serve their citizens as they see fit. Forced regionalization is undemocratic on its face, and a terrible idea in general, which will do nothing but destroy the quality of education in this State. I urge the Education Committee to reject all three of these bills.

Sincerely,
Michaëlle Pearson
Old Lyme, CT