

TESTIMONY OPPOSING BILL SB 738 “An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts”.

To Honorable CT state legislators:

I am voicing my opposition to Bill SB 738 and respectfully ask that you vote NO to this bill. The bill would force regionalization of school districts in towns with a population of less than 40,000, a seemingly arbitrary number.

Regionalization of schools should NOT be forced and NOT have anything to do with the overall population of the town. My town of Wilton falls below the population cutoff but its school district has nearly **4000** students. That’s too large to regionalize with its neighbors and it’s large enough that it needs local control to focus on and deliver a high-quality education. Regionalization will be unnecessary, unwanted and a waste of time and money for our town and any neighbors that we’re forced to merge our schools with. Above all, it will be GROSSLY INEFFICIENT, completely contrary to what this bill claims it intends to do.

If passed, this will cause irreparable harm to the quality of schools in Wilton and other small towns all across Connecticut. A major draw to Wilton for many years has been its outstanding schools, known for small class sizes and close-knit, personalized education. I moved here six years ago with my then-1 year old, specifically for its high-quality K-12 public schools. That excellence is due to local control and local decision making which will be lost to regionalization.

Connecticut overall has a lot to lose if this bill passes. Wilton High School and several other small-town high schools in Fairfield County are currently top-ten CT high schools that also rank high nationally. All will deteriorate if they lose local control. Connecticut is already reeling from the loss of GE and the negative impact of the “SALT” deductions as part of tax reform. It will be irresponsible to further let our public schools deteriorate and drive away residents who are paying its high taxes largely because of its high-quality public schools. New families will no longer consider moving to CT in anticipation of declining schools.

Ultimately, it’s all about the bottom-line. As elected lawmakers tasked with balancing the budget, please look at the big picture. There is no evidence presented that we will see any meaningful savings from this bill. Those districts that thought any savings were possible, have regionalized already. So encourage and incentivize VOLUNTARY regionalization where localities want it, but forcing it down everyone else’s throat will be counterproductive. It will most certainly get people to leave the state and take their tax dollars elsewhere. Thus, this bill WILL NOT help correct the budget imbalance.

I respectfully urge you to take the above thoughts into consideration and vote NO to bill SB 738. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mandar Pendse.

80 Rivergate Drive

Wilton, CT 06897