

Bill SB738, Regionalization

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To Whom it May Concern
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This letter is to express my opposition to Bill SB738 on regionalization in CT state.

We rented for a long time before we could afford a home in Wilton CT and the State seems like it is OK to destroy the value we have created in our homes and community. We moved to the state because of the small town and ability to be involved in the schools. That is the main driver of people working so hard to be able to live in a town like Wilton. Why does the State believe it can destroy value? First we see that you drive quality employers out of the State (thank you for that) which drives down home values and then right after that you decide to keep driving home values down by “proposing” a ridiculous bill that would merge schools? I have spoken with numerous companies and they all indicate that there is no reason to stay in CT. How can they possibly convince executives to move to a state where the government feels they can with a stroke of the pen erase half of your home value. A home is the single largest purchase 99% of American make and have. It's the American dream and you are destroying that!! I fully understand that this can be construed as a wealthy verses other but no one in America should be ashamed of working hard and affording homes in more expensive towns. America was founded off of free will and capitalism not what the Connecticut senate is proposing. Socialism!! Why work hard in Connecticut if the State is going to just take it away.

As far as running the schools, the citizens of Wilton, CT are the best equipped to handle the education of our children locally. Hartford does not have a vested interest in our children like we do. The citizens of Wilton are united on this opposition – Democrats (me included), Republicans and Independents. CT already has forced regionalization in smaller towns which are extremely unhappy. This should be our choice, not yours

I am a dad in Wilton, CT to two children (11 and 8) and have lived in the town since 2001. My wife and I are a dual career couple. I have always combined working with raising a family, despite it being very stressful, because I felt that I was providing a good education for my children being able to go to a small school district such as Wilton. I always felt solace knowing that someday all our hard work would pay off with respect to pulling equity out of our house. If this regionalization bill were to pass, the value of our house with be cut in half and the stress I have endured over the years would have been in vain.

Furthermore, I don't believe that the ends justify the means. Based on my research, I don't believe there will be costs savings at all, and in fact, I believe it will destroy the

state of CT. I know many people who are already planning on removing their children from the public schools and selling their home if the bill passes. There are people also considering moving to a neighboring state. The damage this bill will cause to our housing values and the detriment of our children's educational experience is immeasurable. May I ask each of you – Would you write a check for \$400,000 to the residents in CT who will experience a house value decline in the event of the regionalization? If you are not willing to write this check, then you need to vote “no” to this bill. If talks were to continue, the conversation needs to change from FORCED regionalization to VOLUNTARY regionalization for districts that are deemed to be unsustainable. There also should be discussion about deconsolidation as opposed to regionalization. Below I have summarized other reasons why I think this proposal is ludicrous and will lead to a worse situation in the state of CT.

According to a study conducted by the Hartford Foundation, regionalization may actually lead to diseconomies of scale due to higher transportation costs from longer bus routes, and increases in administrative support staff. Closing of school buildings have limited savings as they often can not be sold, but still need to be maintained. Furthermore, boarded up empty school buildings contribute to a downward economic spiral. According to this same report, “the larger a district becomes, the more resources are devoted to secondary or non-essential activities” (Rodriguez, 2018, pg. 4). Also, diseconomies of scale result where expenditures on administrators increase with greater student enrollment. In 1999, a report from the NJ Assembly Task Force on school District Regionalization concluded “Sharing administrative services doesn't necessarily cut costs, because as personnel begin to take on region-wide responsibilities, it often becomes necessary to hire more staff to support them.” Furthermore, economists have found that consolidation of school districts reduces competition for education services, which leads to inefficiencies. As teacher time increases on administrative tasks, teachers have less time to spend on preparing for their classes. This inefficiency is supported by the fact that Hartford, New Haven and Stamford, with the largest school enrollments have higher than average per pupil spending (Rodriguez, 2018). Research conducted in Massachusetts also found that schools representing larger student populations did not have a lower per pupil spending than those representing smaller districts (Alvarez, Loucagos, Rashid, 2010).

There is research (Rodriguez, 2018) that suggests that regionalization could impact educational achievement outcomes for the following reasons:

- 1) Closing a school may increase travel time to and from school, resulting in fewer parent volunteers and lower extracurricular involvement
- 2) Increased time on the buss increases opportunity costs (time that could be spend on more value-added activities)
- 3) Long bus rides have been associated with declines in achievement scores, increased truancy and more dropouts. Each high school dropout may cost

taxpayers and additional \$292,000 during the dropouts' lifetime. Also, teens experience health detriments when they have long school commutes.

- 4) Student and parent engagement declines due to bureaucracy, leading to higher student absenteeism, resulting in lower educational attainment.

The Hartford report points out that Ellington should serve as a model for high education outcomes at a low cost, with a district of 2,633 and the second lowest per pupil expenditure in the state. Furthermore, in this same research, it is reported that all districts in CT with an enrollment between 2,500 and 3,000 had per-pupil expenditures below the state average. So, why are we moving to larger districts? Based on the research I have read, it doesn't make any sense. Finally, the report argues that DECONSOLIDATION as opposed to regionalization may be more effective at reducing costs. Estimate in Michigan discovered that consolidating small districts to reach 2,900 students would save \$31 million annually, whereas, breaking up districts larger than 2,900 would result in cost saving of \$363 million. In Michigan breaking apart districts would generate 12 times the savings that would be obtained from regionalizing small districts. (Rodriguez, 2018). Has there been much research on this?

Please allow for districts to choose whether to consolidate or not. Otherwise, my family and I'm sure many more companies will leave the State and again the Senate will be chasing their tails trying to make up revenue for failed endeavors.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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References:

Alvarez, A.J., Loucagos, D., and S. Rashid. 2010. A Cost-Benefit Analysis of School Regionalization in Massachusetts. Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Rodriguez, O.J. K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut: Pros, Cons and Surprises. Hartford Foundation. (http://www.hfpg.org/files/1815/2595/9230/Hartford_Foundation_K-12_Regionalization_Report_05-08-18.pdf)