

ELYSE PITTS, 54 ELM PLACE, NEW CANAAN, CT

February 28, 2019

RE: School Consolidation Bills S.B 457, S.B. 738, S.B. 874

Dear Connecticut Legislators,

My name is Elyse Pitts, and I have lived at 54 Elm Place, New Canaan, CT for over 13 years. I currently have 3 kids in the New Canaan Public School District. I am sharing my testimony AGAINST the proposed school consolidation bills. I understand Connecticut is in financial crisis, but the answer to that crisis is not at the expense of our children's education.

I do not disagree with the idea of school consolidation necessarily, just how the bills are currently written with a "one-size fits all" approach. I would propose that no consolidation of two or more school districts result in more than 3,000 children. If you've reviewed "Size Matter: A Look at School District Consolidation" prepared by the Center for American Progress, they recommend a school district size between 2,000 and 4,000, and also warn against a "one-size fits all" approach. If the number is put at 3,000 school-aged children, it allows for communities to grow and change without burdening a child's education.

I grew up in a regional school district in a very rural part of Northwest New Jersey. My school district comprised 3 towns. All three towns at the time had a total population of approximately 18,000 with around 2,000 school-aged children. As a matter of fact, all the regional schools in our wildly rural area all seemed to cap out at around 2,000 to 2,500 school kids. These caps were all based on student to teacher ratios, bussing options, student participation in after school activities, and town growth projections.

If you look up the composition of New Canaan, our one town has both a population of around 18,000 with about 2,000 school-aged children. We do not live in a rural area. The towns around us have very similar population to school-aged children ratios. To pair New Canaan with Darien or Wilton, would double the school district to 4,000 school-aged children and place our kids' education at risk. This is at the high end of what was determined by the Center for American Progress as optimal and does not allow for our towns to grow and change.

Now, if there were two school districts in rural Connecticut that hovered around 1,000 school-aged children per town that for economies of scale wanted to merge to form a 2,000 school-aged children school district, and the towns agreed to it or were eligible for it based on budgetary needs, I am in favor of that.



Elyse Pitts
New Canaan, CT
203-561-7024