



REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION

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TESTIMONY OF THE REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION IN OPPOSITION TO PSB 738 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Redding Board of Education has taken the rare step of stating a position on legislation pending before the General Assembly. The Board, which represents what can only be described as a semi-regionalized district, voted unanimously to oppose PSB 738.

The broadly stated purpose of regionalization is to improve efficiencies in the delivery of the educational services mandated by our State Constitution to half a million young people in our public schools. However, there is no consensus that forced marriage regionalization, or regionalization of any kind will, in fact, achieve this end. According to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving study on K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut, "economies of scale that reduce costs for businesses are not applicable to public education services." While regionalization of smaller districts may result in efficiencies to school staff, building maintenance, and a reduction of central office staff, there will be countervailing increases in expenditures for transportation, staff salaries due to re-negotiated contracts, and an increase in mid-level administrators and administrative support staff. That's all to say nothing of empty school buildings that could present an additional economic hardship to our communities. There is no evidence to indicate that this proposed legislation would result in actual cost reductions. It would simply dilute a proud and effective tradition of local control that is a hallmark of top public education systems in the United States. Local control in our neighbors Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New Jersey helps place them as the only states with higher quality of pre-k-12 education than Connecticut according to US News and World Reports.

It is the duty of local and regional boards of education in Connecticut to carry out the work of the State Board of Education at the local level. In Redding, we take that obligation seriously. High quality education for our students is our first priority, and efforts to compel regionalization fail to address the real challenges facing school districts when it comes to unfunded mandates and the escalating cost of special education. Forced marriage regionalization would only add a new challenge to the mix with no tangible educational benefit.

Moreover, this bill ignores a very real and present-day reality. School districts, including Redding, *already* leverage bulk purchasing capacity with neighboring districts. We *already* share administrative capacity with neighboring Easton and our administrators are *already* looking for every way to be more efficient. The largest stumbling blocks to efficiency come in the form of bureaucratic red tape and onerous mandates from Hartford that limit local financial flexibility and creativity. The simplest way to improve efficiency of education spending is to rollback the dozens of obstacles that get in the way of districts' ongoing and natural efforts to streamline services. Calling for radical change and threatening to effectively strip what little state funding small districts like ours now receive gets a failing grade.