

**Subject:** Opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874

**Date:** 2/28/19

As a parent of three public school students, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools, either explicitly, or via coercive measures such as threatening funding cutbacks or forcing increased funding from Connecticut towns that may not wish to regionalize.

We moved to Stamford from Boston, Massachusetts about six years ago and lived in Stamford for several years. At the time we had a one year old. We now have three kids, ages seven, five, and one. We spent a great deal of time evaluating and deliberating over where to raise our children. We chose Wilton solely due to the quality of the schools, invested a lot of money to live in the town, and we pay a lot of taxes due to the schools. While we are blessed to be able to afford to live in Wilton, we are not rich and do not come from wealth. There have been points in our lives where multiple jobs and long hours needed to be worked to make ends meet. We are currently a two-career household and work long hours to maintain a living that allows us to live in Wilton, sacrificing family time we would like to have in order to give our children a good education.

The school quality is, frankly, the town's main draw, and school quality is what keeps us and many of our friends and other residents here, but I think this is an understatement. In my opinion, ***the school quality is the town's key economic engine, and to tamper with the governance, funding, or infrastructure of the town's schools will force economic ruin on the town.*** Our family would sell our house today and move to another state if we had the freedom, but we don't have that freedom because even the idea of school regionalization has already decreased our property value well below the already-depressed property value levels that existed prior to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 being introduced. Our family had the freedom to choose to live in Wilton over Norwalk three years ago where we probably could have bought the same house for 2/3 of the cost and probably half of the property taxes, and these bills have the high potential to punish us for exercising that freedom. If the regionalization discussion continues for long at the state level or if these bills become a reality, I'm sure other Wilton residents will take losses and get out. The town isn't going to find many buyers while this discussion is open and the possibility of regionalization is on the table and will be even worse off if regionalization is forced. Wilton already has a very difficult time attracting businesses and supporting the ones that already exist here. ***Do you know who the key patrons are of businesses in Wilton? Residents of Wilton who move here for the schools.*** I can't imagine Wilton's economy ever recovering if the town's greatest asset is decimated, which these bills have the potential to do.

The conversation that is happening seems to be about efficiency, economics, and resource allocation not about education and school quality education. If economics are the concern these bills are intended to address, these bills have the potential to seriously harm the economies of some of our state's smaller towns, some of which are big contributors to the state budget in the form of taxes, ultimately hurting rather than harming the state's economy. My understanding is that these bills don't have any grounding in or focus on the improvement of school quality or education of our state's children.

On a personal note, from my basic understanding of the landscape of political agendas underlying SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874, I currently strongly regret voting as a Democrat in the recent election. I did not realize that I was voting for politicians that may be representing the interests of constituents in other

towns at the expense of ours. I hope that my fears are not actualized and that I will find myself pleased that our representatives listen to us and successfully defend the interests of our town.

Please strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools either explicitly or via coercive measures. Please say NO to regionalization as an agenda at the state level. Full stop.

Sincerely,

Paul Rehm, voter, father of three.

Wilton, CT 06897