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Testimony against: SB738, An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts.

Submitted by:  
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As a lifelong resident of CT, and a mother of four children, I find this proposal problematic on several levels, and will enumerate these concerns below. I am a pediatric nurse and PNP candidate at Yale University, and my experience as both a parent and pediatric health care professional have shaped my view of mandated regionalization. Cost savings is the goal via elimination of administrative and instructor positions, building maintenance, etc., but costs increase in a number of ways. While the primary goal of regionalization is usually cost savings, the cost of these endeavors is often much higher than can be measured on paper.

Firstly, regionalization inevitably increases bus travel times. Adolescent sleep deficiency is at epidemic levels, the consequences of which are profound. While there is a large body of evidence on this topic, the 2017 article by Owens and Weiss<sup>1</sup> illustrates the catastrophic consequences of reduced sleep in adolescents, including but not limited to: poor school performance, inattentiveness, reduced executive functioning, increased risk for obesity and obesity-related diseases, and perhaps most alarming, significantly higher rates of depression and suicidality. Increasing travel times, and decreasing an already inadequate sleep regimen, will be detrimental to the wellbeing of adolescents impacted by this change.

Decreased extracurricular involvement and increased truancy have also been documented as a direct result of regionalization.<sup>2</sup> Parental involvement decreases as a result of increased travel time and increased apathy, when parents felt that navigating large schools (and associated programs) at greater distances was no longer feasible. Less parental involvement has been documented as a cause of worsening academic achievement.<sup>3</sup> In terms of the relationship between extracurricular involvement and academic achievement, it is well documented that students who are engaged in their communities via extracurricular activities have

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1 Owens, J. A., & Weiss, M. R. (2017). Insufficient sleep in adolescents: Causes and consequences. *Minerva Pediatrica*, 69(4), 326-336. Doi:10.23736/S0026-4946.17.04914-3

2 Zaff, Jonathan F., et al. "Factors that promote high school graduation: A review of the literature." *Educational Psychology Review* 29.3 (2017): 447-476.

3 Zimmer, Timothy, Larry DeBoer, and Marilyn Hirth. "Examining economies of scale in school consolidation: Assessment of Indiana school districts." *Journal of Education Finance* 35.2 (2009): 103-127.

higher graduation rates, and extracurricular engagement decreases as school population size increases.

At the elementary school level there is broad consensus with ample research that as elementary school size increases, academic achievement decreases. This is attributed to a number of related factors, including increased classroom size leading to a greater number of at-risk children falling through the cracks, poorer attendance, and decreased parental involvement.<sup>4</sup>

These are just a few well-researched arguments against regionalization.

Please look beyond the dollar amount, to the real cost of mandated regionalization – the children. There are many ways to reduce costs in a state budget; diminishing support for education does not need to be one of them.

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<sup>4</sup> Lee, Valerie E., and Susanna Loeb. “School size in Chicago elementary schools: Effects on teachers’ attitudes and students’ achievement.” *American Educational Research Journal* 37.1 (2000): 3-31.