

TOWN OF WINDHAM

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TOWN MANAGER



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Testimony of Windham Town Manager James Rivers in Support of

Chairman Robert Sanchez, Chairman Douglas McCrory, Ranking Members and Distinguished members of the Education Committee

I am pleased to have the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **Proposed Bill 738 An Act Concerning The Creation of Regional School Districts**, and **Proposed Bill 457 An Act Concerning The Size of School Districts**. Also, I support two Proposed Bills Submitted by Representative Susan Johnson which are related to the bills on regionalization: **Proposed Bill 5783 An Act Establishing a Dual Magnet School In Windham**, and **Proposed Bill 6825 An Act Concerning Funding For Alliance Districts That Offer Early College Opportunities**.

I am James Rivers Town Manager for the Town of Windham which is an Alliance District located in Eastern Connecticut. The proposed bills will in all likelihood have a greater impact on the school districts in Eastern Connecticut than in the other more densely populated areas in Connecticut. I have been Windham's Town Manager for more than a year now and have come to realize that our Alliance District School has been receiving less than its fair share of the Educational Cost Sharing grant for more than 20 years. I would like to thank the Legislature for beginning to increase the funding for Connecticut's Alliance Districts so that they are receiving funding amounts comparable to the schools in our surrounding school districts.

The cost of Education is not going down yet the districts that surround Windham have declining student enrollments and they receive a larger per pupil portion of the state's ECS grant. The more students in a district the better chance that the district will offer a wider variety of educational opportunities. In Windham we have a Dual Language Elementary School that provides an exceptional opportunity for our students to learn more than one language. Many parents in Windham work to have their children enrolled in the North Windham School that offers this opportunity. Additionally, Windham High School now offers the Early College Opportunity program which provides the chance for high school students to earn college credit while they get their high school diploma.

Connecticut has successfully regionalized its Hartford area school districts with Magnet schools that provide opportunities not available in neighborhood schools. This is because the Magnet schools serve larger populations. The Magnet schools can specialize in educational areas unlike the local neighborhood schools. There will be less resistance and more willingness to regionalize if we provide enhanced educational opportunities in regional Magnet schools. With regional Magnet Schools, students will in all likelihood have an education when they finish high school that will make them ready to go to work in a high paying job or continue their education with an Associates degree when they enter a higher educational institution to complete their four-year college degree.