

As a parent of public school students, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874 and any other bill that opens the doors to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

First, I would like to say that these bills have nothing to do with educating our children nor improving the quality of their education...they are ONLY in the name of cutting costs and reallocating funds. When it comes to our children, we simply cannot entertain legislation that are at a cost to them. Education should be the primary focus.

I love Canton Public Schools and wouldn't want my children anywhere else. Each school district in CT has a long-established culture, and my family knows that Canton is where we belong. If I wanted my kids in the Simsbury or Farmington school systems, I would have purchased a home in one of those towns. I believe that regionalization would erode those cultures and blur the lines of what makes each town's school system unique. There is a certain pride that comes with each school (as there should be!) but I don't want my kids to be one of over 2000, I want them in a smaller environment where they are heard, known, understood, and where they're interests are encouraged and nurtured....all things better done on a smaller scale.

Canton is a town that has worked very hard to keep costs in line and our cost per student is one of the lowest in our area. For example, Canton still maintains only three buildings even though we have four schools, Primary, Intermediate, Middle and High. The Middle and High Schools are combined into one building. The administration and our board of education has done a really nice job of making it feel like two separate schools without the cost of an extra building. It works very well for our community and saves money.

As parents, we are heard when issues come up and we have opportunity to help make our ideas a reality for our kids when there is need. Just recently, Canton was able to put in new lights on the field and new brick patios on the grounds of the middle/high school. It was a long process but through collaborative efforts by the community and the board of education, it got done. I fear that those types of initiatives will be lost in a system where one board of ed is responsible for the oversight of so many and where the redistribution of funds to other districts will cause our visions to be pushed to the side.

There may be districts that are in favor of regionalization. I can't say that it's bad for everyone everywhere, but I know that it is an undesirable situation for our community in Canton especially where so much has been done to keep costs down while offering some of the best education and experiences. We truly value our small-town school system and the community we've built. We should not be forced to regionalize, and we should not be penalized for not joining a larger community when our board has already done such an outstanding job.

I hope you will oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874 and any other legislation that opens doors to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Thank you.

Sally Schueler, Canton,