

February 28, 2019

To the members of the Education and Appropriations Committees and all the Connecticut state legislators,

We are writing today as our testimony that we firmly disagree with proposed state regionalization of school districts. We have been residents of Connecticut for 16 years. We chose to move to Westport for the public education system for our young children. We parents of two local high school students now and we understand the value of a quality education provided by a locally run board of education, and town run school system. We have watched as the politicians in Hartford have increasingly run a dysfunctional government that puts the state in an ever more precarious financial position. Why would any resident of this state want their local education decisions determined by a state government that cannot keep their own fiscal house in order. We strongly urge you as our elected official to vote against and do not pass Senator Martin Looney's Senate Bill 454/738 and the Governor's budget bill which speaks to regionalization SB 874.

We firmly believe that the regionalization of the schools will create a degradation of the quality of education. This will translate to reduced property values as education is one of the primary reasons a family determines where they will purchase a home. The state is already suffering from a loss of residents due to the increasing tax burdens being placed on residents. This will only provide another reason for citizens to choose to live in another state. Additionally, there is the potential increased cost of transportation of students that would be required. This is at a time that our state is already grappling with a deteriorating infrastructure and over crowded roads. The regionalization of schools can also result in a lack of competition for quality teachers which creates a diminution of supply of quality teachers as local incentives disappear to reward quality educators. We are huge supporter of the quality teachers in our school district; however, we are not a supporter of ever stronger unions that create LIFO rules of last in first out, and seniority over performance-based criteria for hiring and firing. A regionalized school system, in our opinion, will only serve to strengthen these unions grip on our schools.

We leave you with some important questions. Is it true that State Representative Joe Aresimowicz, the Speaker of the House, is the Education Coordinator for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 4 and if so how is he allowed to deal with, craft, have input on, or vote on, any legislation or committee work that involves union contracts, negotiations or anything union related that comes in front of the legislature? Does our legislature not have any conflict of interest mandates?

Regards,

Linda and Andrew Schwartz
Westport, CT 06880