

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senator Looney and Senator Duffs proposed bills, PSB 738, PSB 457 and PSB 874, which would force regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

We moved to New Canaan in 2008 specifically for the fabulous and top-rated school system and that is what is keeping us here. We are currently searching for a home to purchase in this town, but as so many others in the same position, these bills are horrifying and keeping us from making that commitment. You will lose new taxpayer dollars as a result of these horrifying ideas! I can't even tell you how many people are talking about moving out of CT if this has any chance of being approved. You need to understand that the voices opposing these bills are strong and our actions will have negative consequences on Connecticut's economic standing.

These proposals will not improve our children's' education or save taxpayers any money. They will harm our communities and especially hurt disadvantaged students. They also undermine the strong voices of parents and educators in our local school districts.

Our top schools, which will be affected by these proposals, should be a model for school districts, which are struggling. We should not be penalized because other school systems have so many inefficiencies. You should, instead, examine what makes these extraordinary school districts achieve top academic ratings, and work to improve those that are struggling.

Regionalized schools have longer commutes. Parent volunteering and extracurricular activities, which are some of the keys to success in our great schools, will suffer a great decline. Regionalized schools have been shown to have more truancy and higher drop out rates.

Connecticut's larger school districts such as Hartford, New Haven and Stamford have high costs, while many of our smaller districts have average or low costs. These bills will also damage our property values and harm our tax bases, making it much harder to attract new taxpayers and businesses, which are supposed to be some of your top goals as our new legislators! Connecticut is already facing an increased outflow of residents due to high taxes and poor spending policies. These bills will only accelerate the problem!

At-risk students thrive better in smaller school districts (300 – 600 students). Regionalization risks putting them into environments where they will suffer personally and academically.

Larger districts are also less connected with their local communities. Teachers are less involved. Teacher interaction is critical in making the difference between success and failure for disadvantaged (and all) students.

For these reasons, I urge you, on behalf of my community, our teachers and our students, to support the opposition of SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 or any other effort to force consolidation of Connecticut's public schools.

Sincerely,

Katherine R. Sexton
Town of New Canaan