

I am writing to give you my testimony, thoughts, and questions to ponder on proposed bill No. 738: An Act Concerning the Creation of Regional School Districts.

As a parent, tax payer, and Board of Education member in East Lyme I have many thoughts and concerns I would like to bring forth for you to consider as you weigh this proposed bill. First, I would like to say that I feel like this bill is being brought forward as a reactionary response to the state's budget crisis and not with any thought on how it will impact families and children in our state. This bill seems to spend a lot of time worrying about collective bargaining agreements and not "working to create a more efficient educational system" which is what the statement of purpose states.

The proposed regionalization of our schools comes with many questions that I feel the bill in its current state does not address properly. I have had first hand, face to face conversations at a grass roots level with my constituents as a representative of the East Lyme Board of Education, where they share their questions/concerns with me, and now; I in turn as a constituent of yours, am petitioning you to provide clear transparent answers to our concerns. 1. Which towns/schools would you be using as your "school hub" or are you keeping them all open and calling them regional districts so that you can eliminate superintendent and central office positions? 2. What are all of the numerous towns in this state going to do with all of the debt that they have taken on renovating and building new schools that have been bonded the last few years? Are they now going to sit empty? 3. The bigger cities and wealthier towns don't seem to be affected at all by this proposed change, why is that?

Speaking for my family, we picked where we purchased our home and had our children based on the school system. We wanted to live in a small town with small neighborhood schools. This is the choice we made. We do not want big schools or a big town. I know I am not the only one. I am sure if you all ask yourself why you live where you do it will be because of the school system.

Some of my constituents have asked me direct questions about our unique situation that I bring forth to you now. Looking at the proposed bill and the probate map there are some specific questions with regards to East Lyme joining a district with Montville, Uncasville, Salem, and Old Lyme but not Lyme because they will be bussed to Old Saybrook? Does this mean that Region 18 will dissolve? What does this mean for the 20 year cooperative agreement between East Lyme and Salem?

Our district has already taken steps to share services and has been doing so for many years. We have an agreement with Salem that allows their students to attend our high school. We also share youth sports and activities with them through enrollment and facility usage. We have an agreement with Waterford that allows us to use their alternative education services instead of establishing one of our own. Old Lyme allows our students who are interested to attend their robotics club. We share services as it relates to special education bussing and we share professional development opportunities across districts.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my thoughts and concerns



Jaime Barr Shelburn

East Lyme Board of Education, Secretary