

Please Oppose S.B. 457, 738, and 874

Chairmen McCory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarthy, and other distinguished members of the Education Committee: my name is Valerie Shukovsky and I'm from Wilton. I am opposed to bills 457, 738, 874 and any other forms of these bills.

Nine years ago, I moved from New Jersey to Connecticut. In deciding where to live, the single most important factor to me was the school system that my children would attend. After weeks of research, we decided on Wilton specifically because of its quality school system.

Living in Wilton means that I live in a more modest house than I would elsewhere. If I want to go to Costco or any big name stores, I have a 30 minute drive either to Norwalk or Danbury. If I need to take a highway to go somewhere, I have a 25 minute drive to go to the Merritt or a 20 minute drive to go to 95. But, I willingly make these trade-offs so my children can have a quality education.

My children have flourished under the Wilton educational system. Many of their teachers have made real impacts on their lives. One of my daughters, who is currently in middle school, still talks about the love and care that her kindergarten teacher showed her when she was going through a difficult time. Currently, at their middle school, another teacher has encouraged my daughters to participate in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. The teachers truly see my children as individuals and take the time to get to know them.

As I look ahead to their high school years, I am so impressed with the huge number of honors and Advanced Placement courses that are available at Wilton High School, not to mention all the clubs that kids can join to advance their hobbies and future career interests.

I am very concerned that as schools regionalize, this phenomenal school system, and other ones like it elsewhere in the state, will suffer in the quality of their education.

Why do I believe this? First of all, studies of states that have regionalized their education systems, such as West Virginia, show that regionalization lowers the quality of education and does not reduce costs. Secondly, from personal experience, from grades 7-12, I attended a large public school system, so I know first-hand the difference between a small town system and large system.

Large school systems have larger class sizes. This results in less personalized learning and attention. It also results in more behavior problems. Since teachers are forced to spend more time dealing with behavior issues rather than teaching, student learning suffers. Teacher interest in individual student outcomes wanes. Funding for Honors and AP classes are spread thin and over time, evaporate as high-achieving students are pushed to the back burner. In a nutshell, students become a cog on a large assembly line forced to learn using a one-size-fits-none approach rather than an individual worthy of personalized attention.

Mr. Chairmen, Ranking Members and distinguished members of the Education Committee, every child is worthy of personalized attention and a quality education. Please oppose bills 457, 738, 874, and any others like this. Thank you for your consideration.