

As an Old Lyme resident with school-aged children, I am adamantly **OPPOSED** to the following bills:

Senate Bill 457 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS- Requires any school district with a student population of fewer than two thousand students to join a new or an existing regional school district until that district equals two thousand or more.

Senate Bill 738 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS- Requires towns to join state-created regional school districts similar in size to the state's Probate Districts.

Governor's Bill SB 874 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

We are already in a regionalized school district that, although smaller than the 2000-student threshold, significantly outperforms schools and districts of larger sizes. In addition to undermining all that is working well in our district, this poorly considered regionalization plan bifurcates Lyme and Old Lyme which already share numerous town resources including schools and have a long history of collaboration. By not considering such partnerships already in place, this plan will most certainly create more problems than it solves; e.g. needing to transport Lyme students across the Connecticut River via Interstate 95 (or ferry boat!) instead of the short distance to neighboring Old Lyme. Clearly decisions like these must be made at the local, not state level, to avoid such obvious pitfalls.

I also agree with all of the following points made by our Superintendent of Schools, Ian Nevasier, Region 18, who also vehemently opposes the aforementioned bills:

"The above proposals to regionalize school districts will have a significant negative impact on the Lyme-Old Lyme Schools. Besides the fact that the proposals suggest splitting our outstanding district in two, the idea that it will somehow save money has no merit. Other states that function with large county school systems, such as is proposed, end up with enormous districts that actually cost the taxpayer more money due to the sheer size of the organizations and the numerous layers of bureaucracy that are required to run them. Of greatest concern is the idea that we will lose our small local schools which are vitally important to the success of our students. Students could be forced to endure lengthy bus rides, attend massive schools where they lose personal connection with their teachers, and our communities will no longer have the ability to manage the education of our children. Districts across the state, ours included, already engage in regional services that save money. To force this upon our schools based on arbitrary enrollment and population numbers is foolish and short-sighted. We are not opposed to the idea of regionalizing services, and in fact do so in many areas, but are opposed to the idea of the state mandating this with no data to support their actions. Many of our residents have chosen to move to our towns because of their small size. The proposed legislation stands in contrast to the desire of those residents to live in a community that has that "small-town America" feel. The idea of local control is a concept that is rooted in our New England heritage." – Ian Nevasier, Superintendent of Region 18 Schools

I strongly urge the General Assembly to vote AGAINST school regionalization under these ill-advised bills.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Sicuranza
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