

Testimony submitted to the Education Committee
February 26, 2019

Written testimony In Opposition to Proposed Bill SB 738

To members of the Education Committee:

As a resident of Ridgefield, CT, I oppose the proposed bill SB 738 as an attempt to impose a “one size fits all” solution to a perceived issue that does not affect all.

I am uncertain as to the problem we are trying to solve. If it is to create a more efficient educational system, I would argue that locally we have an efficient educational system. If it is to create a more efficient educational system on a state level by ensuring that the funds the state provides to towns is being used most effectively and efficiently, then this bill is way over sweeping.

Ridgefield is a district of just under 5000 students, and about 26,000 residents. We have a BOE budget of \$95 M which is managed effectively and efficiently by our local district administration with fiscal accountability to the local BOE and ultimately the Board of Finance and local taxpayers. Our school administration, our staff, and our resources are aligned to work in furtherance of the mission and vision of our local district. This mission and vision, and the strategic plan behind it, were the result of over a year of collaboration between our district staff, students, parents and community members to design a vision that reflects the aspirations and values of our local community.

I urge you to carefully consider what the problem is that you are trying to solve, and develop a plan that directly addresses that problem. Perhaps a better approach would be incentives for small districts to build economies of scale (or the reduction of state educational funding). Perhaps the definition of a district can be built around financial parameters such as per pupil spending rather than town population. Perhaps consider removing some of the current barriers to shared services so that towns can voluntarily explore shared services where it makes sense.

We’ve learned from studies of consolidation of school districts in other states that in general it does not result in a net savings to taxpayers. Where regionalization or consolidation of districts would result in a tax savings to one district, it usually results in a tax increase to other districts entering the relationship. ([source:](#))

We are a district that receives very little funding from the state, yet are a district that provides a disproportionate amount of tax revenue to the state. The taxpayers in Ridgefield are already subsidizing towns that operate inefficiently. Please do not impose yet another fiscal burden on our town in the name of economic efficiency because that will not be our experience.

Respectfully,

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