

February 28, 2019

To: [edtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:edtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

Cc: [Will.Haskell@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Will.Haskell@cga.ct.gov)

Subject: Opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874

Members of the Committee-

I am writing to express my strong objection to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 any other bill that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

My family and I moved to Wilton CT a little over 5 years ago. We specifically chose this town due to the character and quality of the school system. With a now 2<sup>nd</sup> grader, and a 4 year old set to enter public school in 2020, this remains incredibly important to us. So much so that were we to see a measurable decrease in the quality of the education that are children will receive, **we would leave the state**. Quality of education is of critical concern to us, and it is alarming that none of these three bills include the word quality. How can quality of education and student outcomes not be baseline criteria when looking at changes related to the education system?

We also firmly believe that the best people to make decisions about the education system in our town are the residents of the town and the officials that we elect to our town government and Board of Education. These are the people that should be empowered to make decisions about our school system, and their hand should not be forced by the state government. I believe the state government should focus on removing impediments that currently prevent our local government from taking action, rather than focusing on ways to remove local control and local decision making.

I also have some specific concerns with the Governor's bill, SB 874:

- It includes many references to redistricting despite the governor verbally indicating (in a 2/26/19 press conference) that redistricting should not be part of the scope. I am concerned that this would provide a mandate for the commission to focus too broadly.
- It appoints a commission of 17 people, but only includes one parent, which I don't think would adequately represent the parent perspective.
- I've heard much discussion of "incentives" in the bill, or using carrots rather than sticks, however in my definition, incentives mean providing something additional as a reward for taking a particular action, \*not\* taking something away as a punishment for not taking a particular action.
- The 1.5 year plus span proposed for the commission means an extremely long period of uncertainty about the future of public school education in Connecticut, which is likely to contribute to increased resident outflow and a significant decrease in people moving to the state. The schools have historically been a draw, but the looming threat to the

schools is already changing people's minds about moving to the state. This can't be an outcome that would be favorable for Connecticut in the short or long term.

I urge you to abandon these proposals and any others that open the door to forced school consolidation. Time would be better spent identifying other ways to address the serious issues facing our state without pushing even more residents to leave the state.

Sincerely,

Caroline Unger  
Wilton