

February 27, 2019

TO: State Legislation

From: George Benington

Re: S.B. 457, 738 & 874

I am writing this note to voice my strong opposition to any plans to regionalize school districts throughout CT for the following reasons:

- 1) Impact to real estate valuations. Without exception, medium home prices across the state are down anywhere from 12%-18%. Such a proposal, if enacted, could further negatively impact these prices since most families who migrate from NYC or Westchester are coming to the individual towns for their excellent schools.
- 2) Near term savings but are these savings sustainable long term. Consolidation brings near term savings but over a span of 3-5 years, if this plan doesn't work or there are shifts in demographics, untangling such a consolidation will be expensive. There are exceptions of course. If a township experiences year over year declines in enrollment, consolidation into another district would be necessary.
- 3) Lessons of history-if you look at different school districts who kept the decision making at a local level, they continue to thrive. Regionalization for just savings alone could have major impacts to local communities.

In conclusion, we need to think long term versus short. The strong, locally controlled, school systems in our state are one of the top three reasons why families move here. Weakening such a system could have unintended consequences. As the state tries to pull itself up out of an economic hole, such a move, particularly in the Fairfield County towns could have an adverse affect.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

George Benington

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