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To Whom It May Concern:

As a parent with children in the Wilton Public Schools, I am writing to state my strong opposition to bills SB 738, SB 457, SB 874 and any other bills that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools. If these bills are passed I fear that there will be an exodus of citizens from our town and I daresay from Connecticut, especially for those of many who work in New York or New Jersey.

While my wife and I lived in another town prior to having children, we moved to Wilton specifically for the quality of the school system. This reputation of quality permeates colleges all across the US and is a key factor in keeping us in Wilton. This reputation also keeps many of our friends and family in Wilton. Even the commentary of forced regionalization has already done damage to the reputation of our town as well as our state.

The citizens of Wilton are very engaged in the discourse on education and we view it as central to the identity of our town. As such we feel like we have a voice and have a certain level of control over the quality of education. With forced regionalization of any sort, whether by carrot or stick, I fear we will lose that voice and with it the freedom to choose our own path. This erodes the identity of our town as well as the quality of our town.

There does not seem to be any mention of school quality in these bills - and I have not found any definitive evidence to even suggest that merging school districts will in any way improve the quality of education a student receives. In fact it risks doing the exact opposite.

These bills only seem to be about saving money. I recognize that the financial strength of our state has eroded under several administrations and that this administration is trying to tackle that decline head on. I commend you for that, but there are many other ways to save money. Having the type of education system we have attracts people, business and revenue to our state and in particular to towns like ours. Our education system in its current form is a revenue generator for our state not a line item on a budget. Please don't treat it that way.

Further, having this issue open until late 2020, as the Governor's bill suggests, I fear that our property values will continue to erode and even fewer people will be interested in moving to Connecticut given the uncertainty. People with young children often list the quality of the schools as the most important factor in their home search. If regionalization remains an open issue for nearly 2 years, we will likely see many choosing to live in other states where they could be certain that their children would remain in a particular school district. This will further hurt our state's damaged economy.

The people of Connecticut have spoken loudly that we oppose SB 738, SB 457, SB 874. By opposing bills SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, you as elected officials will be respecting our wishes.

In addition you will also be exhibiting the type of good judgement that will attract more residents, businesses and revenue to our fine state.

Connecticut is one of the first colonies and was built on freedom of choice. I believe forced school regionalization is not in the best interest of our children nor the State of Connecticut and is antithetical to that freedom.

I ask that you, as elected officials who represent the voice of the citizens of the state of Connecticut, respect our collective views by opposing SB 738, SB 457, SB 874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools.

Sincerely,

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