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The Education Committee

Testimony in regard to SB 454 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS and SB 874 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES IN CONNECTICUT,

Honored committee members,

I am writing to ask this committee to reject the proposal to force regionalization of school districts.

The stated purpose of SB 454 is to create more efficient educational system. This is short sighted in its scope; it may save some, but not likely a significant amount of money for the state and at far greater than monetary expense.

There are existing districts that have consolidated, based on student population and town finances. This elective regionalization is working where the adjoining regions choose to combine. Forcing regionalization is unfair as well as is dissolving these voluntarily consolidated schools. Community participation is important to consistent and efficient education.

Excessive distance from a school creates many problems, not the least of which is long commutes especially by bus. Arriving at school after an extended bus ride is not conducive to students focus and frame of mind, it will be detrimental to learning, and to time available after school for homework and projects.

Long commutes will also reduce the student's ability to stay and use the library or get extra help which is often provided after school.

It will reduce the ability of parents to participate on school boards, in volunteering at the school and in parental support for clubs, band and sports teams. It even will be detrimental to student participation in any of those activities as the rehearsals, shows, practices and games can run late. Adding additional commute time will make participation in these activities more difficult for both students and their parents who need to provide rides and who wish to attend the events.

I believe that a better method of creating a more efficient educational system is to repeal the Minimum Budget Requirements mandate and allow local municipalities more control over their school financing.

Regards,
Mark Conrad