

To: edtestimony@cga.ct.gov

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

The below is my written testimony for public record expressing my serious concern and opposition to 3 bills proposed that would force public school consolidation across our state (SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874). I am opposed to these bills in any form, even as a "directive for a study by commission" as outlined in the Governor's bill SB 874.

Both my husband and I grew up and were educated in CT public schools (Ridgefield and Fairfield respectively). We *chose* to move to Wilton, specifically for their school system and not just for the high ratings and success rate but also for the size of the district. I will be registering my daughter for Kindergarten on Tuesday and I am now plagued with serious doubts about the future of Wilton schools because of these 3 bills.

It is clear to me based on how these were filed and the continuing discussions about them that improving education quality is not the priority. In fact, there is no wording in *any* of them about improving education for *any* child in *any* district. It appears to be all about financing and fixing budgets at the expense of successful (and also currently efficient) towns and districts. It will also be at the expense our children and their education system. For example, language in these proposals speaks to collective bargaining agreements. Labor unions do not and should not ever govern the efficiency of a school district. Under CT law, a duly elected Board of Education hires a Superintendent to run school systems. I fail to see any evidence that our current practices need to change. Although it's not in any language of the proposals, I am wondering if these are a backdoor effort to steer ECS funding away from smaller towns to bigger cities. I ask that our legislators be straightforward and take politics out of this, as it concerns our children and their future.

There is already data and research that proves consolidation or regionalization does not save money and that larger districts hinder educational success rates. Whereas smaller school districts under localized control and oversight continue to be more successful across measures. (see research from the **National Education Policy Center, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving** dated 2018, <http://ctbythenumbers.info/2018/07/09/k-12-school-district-regionalization-may-do-more-harm-than-good-analysis-finds>)

Eliminating local control of our schools effectively eliminates what makes us great (attracting young families and best talent in teaching and administration) and will irreversibly change the character of our town and towns across our state.

Though I understand how economies of scale appear attractive from a fiscal standpoint, these bills attack our most precious asset as a community and as a state - the quality of our schools. If approved, these bills would only further an additional outflow of residents, many of whom came to this state for the schools, further eroding state revenue and worsening the state's fiscal crisis.

I don't believe it is the right approach to try fix something broken by breaking everything else. And therefore, I am asking you, to oppose these bills - SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 – that open the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut public schools. Please do not let them take a step further in the legislative process. If they move forward, I fear I will have no choice but to consider not just moving out of Wilton, but out of Connecticut entirely.

Sincerely,  
Erin Creighton

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