

To: Education and Appropriations Committees
Re: Public hearing: SB 738 SB 457 and SB 874
From: Rick Fonte, 28 Deer Path Road, Weston, CT 06883

I am a new resident of Weston, CT, having recently moved to Weston because of the quality and size of the public schools. I am writing to advise you of my strong and vehement opposition to forced school regionalization and Governor Lamont's proposal to shift even more of the state's financial obligations to Weston and other municipalities.

Forced regionalization would undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the quality of Weston's public schools, as well as substantial negative impacts on property values as many/ most Weston residents and prospective residents choose to live in Weston for the schools. In addition, there is absolutely NO empirical evidence to validate that regionalization actually leads to cost savings. In fact, research by the National Education Policy Center concluded that benefits from school district consolidation are "vastly overestimated." Further, an article in Education Finance and Policy suggested that district consolidation may actually create negative impacts such as higher transportation costs, a "leveling up" of salaries, and more negative attitudes among staff members and parents. The same study suggests that financial benefits may be found only when consolidation of very small districts (fewer than 300 to 1000 students) occurs- Weston is not a very small district.

These proposals are ill-conceived and harmful. Managing state and local finances cannot and should not result in a detrimental impact on the quality of our schools, or result in extreme financial hardships to residents by way of significant declines to property values.

Regards,

Rick Fonte
Partner/Principal
Ernst & Young LLP
Direct: +1 203 674 3005 | Cell: +1 203 912 9296 | richard.fonte@ey.com

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick M. Fonte". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'R' and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.