

February 28, 2019

Subject: WRITTEN TESTIMONY OPPOSING SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874.

Senate President Duff,

Please accept this written testimony to be entered into the record **OPPOSING** SB 738, SB 457 and SB 874 current under consideration and discussion. As a resident of Weston, Connecticut, I appreciate our small community and our wonderful schools. We have a great teachers, administrators and volunteers. We have a beautiful connected campus that put our children, of every age, at the center of town almost as a symbol of what is truly important. The proposed Senate Bills attempt to shift the balance of power, from local communities to Hartford, turning our schools into regional learning centers without any consideration to the impact this will have to the students and the communities in which we live.

This regionalization effort is not new. Advocates, for years, have tried to submit bills that would enable greater revenue sharing between towns and municipalities. The budget crisis, which is a direct result of the policy decisions of our representatives and the former Governor Malloy, have provided an opportunity to re-brand the case for regionalization using our schools as the vehicle. It is a disgraceful attempt to reinvigorate tired policies for a State that continues to suffer the extraordinary fleeing of citizens and businesses alike.

In 2008, the State Revenues from Income Taxes where \$7,512,700,000. In 2017, the Revenue from Income Taxes were \$8,986,000,000. This represents an increase of \$1.47 billion dollars from ten years earlier. The fact is, the average citizen of Connecticut has already sacrificed for the poor decisions, misguided expenditures and non-sense projects that, as a result, have depleted our resources and emergency fund. This budget crisis, that stirs the debate for school regionalization, was created by the very people that have squandered our tax dollars in the past. School regionalization is not the solution to our budget crisis. It won't save money, as multiple studies have found that consolidation neither leads to efficiency or higher performance. It is just another mirage, much like the lottery and using lottery revenue to fund education.

The fact is, we have sacrificed enough. We should not and will not support changing the way we educate because our representatives and Governor can't budget or govern. Policies like the bills submitted for consideration will only cause more residents to leave and seek private education which will further dilute federal funding. The solution to our problem lies not in school regionalization, but in the un-doing of the harmful policies that have put us in the very situation we find ourselves in today.

I expect representatives to put the children at the center of this debate, much like we do in Weston everyday. If you do, it will become blinding obvious that these bills are not in their best interest or the interest of a better, stronger Connecticut.

Regards,

Ian Forrest

Weston, Connecticut