

As a resident and parent to young children in Wilton, I strongly oppose SB 738, SB457, and SB874 and any other bill that supports forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

My husband and I moved to Wilton, CT in January of 2018. We have two children aged 11 months and 3 years. We had owned a townhouse in Stamford, but as our family grew we could not ignore the status of the Stamford schools, and the decaying of the school facilities. We were left questioning a move or private school.

After much thought and debate, we fell in love with the town of Wilton, and its small town pride, and outstanding school system. We are a two income home which was necessary to take on the increased costs of living in Wilton, but we were happy to do this in an effort to provide our children the opportunity to experience a strong education matched with a positive small town vibe.

My husband is of chinese descent, and I am Jewish. We are aware that Wilton (and most of the neighboring towns) are lacking in diversity, and we thought about this a lot before moving. We have found that there was no locked gate on admission to Wilton. We have not felt anything but acceptance and involvement in this town and its happenings, and we are hoping more families like us will move here and increase diversity in the classrooms.

The suggestions that our schools should be forced to regionalize with other towns, and run the risk of losing the small town identify we have loved, or an increase to class size, or a shift in our schools we would be districted to... It is a disturbing and anxiety provoking concept for us. We moved here for what some of these bills threaten to take away.

It is clear the state wants to assist more at risk neighborhoods, while also decreasing state costs. While that is admirable and understandable, there is evidence to suggest that neither of these two goals will be reached with forced regionalization.

Information provided by The Hartford Foundation and reviewed by Rodriguez Data Solutions looking at regionalization in CT, VT, ME, NY yielded the following information:

In at risk communities the smaller the school size the better for optimal achievement for students. So the idea of potentially closing schools or increasing class sizes could lead to a direct result in worsened school performance for at risk students. It also suggests that increased size does not always lead to increased savings. The data goes so far as to suggest that deconsolidation could lead to cost savings.

Furthermore, the study suggests that there is a direct correlation between consolidation and a decrease in student after school participation.

I am a social worker who recently moved my private practice to CT from Manhattan. I have voted as a democrat for my entire adult life and am registered to the democratic party. I have to make clear that my husband and I find this issue so important that we will vote based on where

our potential representatives fall on this issue. We will not support this regionalization, and we will most certainly move out of state with my full business to avoid it before our children are of age to enter the public school system.

We are not alone. People move to Wilton and endure the long commute to the city and the high taxes for the community and primarily for the schools. If the state and political representatives force the town to change, there will be an exodus from constituents which will most certainly only continue to hurt the State's financial woes. These bills threaten the fabric of the impression of our beautiful town from within and from without (as evidence to this I know two families who were actively looking only in Wilton and have now directed their home hunts to other states and towns).

Please, find other solutions to state financial woes and #HANDSOFFFOURSCHOOLS. Please oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB874, and any other legislation that opens the door to forced regionalization of Connecticut Public Schools.

Alyssa Friedman-Yan, LCSW

Wilton Resident and mom of two soon to be Wilton public school students