

State of Connecticut:

I write in strong opposition of Senate Bill 457, Senate Bill 738, and Governor's Bill SB 874, summarized as state-forced regionalization.

The number one reason my husband and I invested in our move to the town of Lyme is the excellent, competent, caring teachers and administrators of Region 18 that provide individual and professional attention to students and families. Period.

These three Bills will undo everything we worked hard for and negatively impact our small-town way of life. They will negatively affect our children's education, our finances, our real estate investment, and it will increase stress on our children's active lives with lengthy, exhausting commutes to school, including before and after school activities, eliminating excellent opportunities the students have now, the teachers and administrators' jobs and lives, our jobs, and our commutes. The list goes on.

Sixteen years ago, we moved back to Connecticut from New Mexico, pregnant, with the expectation that my family could have an excellent educational experience like I did growing up here in my home state of Connecticut. I am very proud of the education I received in the Waterford Public Schools, class of 1994.

My husband and I worked hard as a dual income family, juggling childcare and saving money to move away from our former location, two towns over from Lyme (15 minutes away). Our daughter did not receive the support she needed to learn through her challenges and tap into her abilities at her former elementary school after numerous requests for help. We tried for three years, kindergarten through second grade.

By third grade, our daughter attended Lyme. We purchased a small home, a fixer-upper, and put blood, sweat and tears into it as well as a significant financial investment, with the expectation this is our long-term family home in the beauty of the country woods minutes from the town of Old Lyme with a shared artistic heritage. Lyme and Old-Lyme are closely entwined. We have a little land to farm privately and our children can enjoy this home for many years to come. The concept that our hard work and plans would be undone by the State of Connecticut is unfathomable.

The research we conducted on school systems and the move we made to Lyme has had a positive effect on our daughter's educational experience and outcome in comparison to our former school system, it is as different as night and day. The principal and teachers at Lyme Consolidated School exceeded our expectations and set our daughter on a trajectory for an exceptional education! She is now a freshman at Lyme-Old Lyme High School (LOLHS) and focused on attending college and a successful career in a STEAM field. She has blossomed into a dedicated scholar, excelling at the top of her class.

We expect the same local structure and caring, high performing school system for our son when he starts pre-school at age three in our Lyme-Old Lyme District 18 for academic year 2020-2021, through his high school graduation in 2035. Because of how pleased we are with the Lyme-Old Lyme School System, we fully support Superintendent of Schools, Ian Neviaser, as he represents our district. Local control of the school system is best and smart.

But if these Bills are pushed through at the State level of government, if this is the future, we will reconsider our plans. It will be another reason families are fleeing Connecticut. The loss of local government control, and control of our schools, is not looked upon favorably. To say the least, taxpayers (with and without children) are irate. Please let a good thing be. Let Lyme, Old Lyme, Region 18 and all other districts decide locally what is best.

Please do not undo our hard work invested in our home and community. Keep our educational decisions at the local level. Keep the Lyme-Old Lyme Region 18 School District together as one district. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Kristin Ahnell Geshel