

Educational Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Ave  
Hartford, CT 06106

02/28/2019

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

Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 as a Connecticut's parent whose children attend CT public schools. Like many, many other families in our town, we are both working parents who chose Wilton for its outstanding schools. We chose longer commutes to work and higher property taxes in exchange for our children attending public schools with excellent academic performance, as opposed to going the private school route.

We oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 because neither proposal mentions ways to improve academic performance across the State, while that should be the primary focus of any school reform proposed at anytime, anywhere! Moreover, SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 suggest cost savings without any substantial facts to support those claims. The proposals to replace fixed salary costs with variable costs, especially in the transportation sector, where costs of fuel and maintenance grow proportionally with the size of the area covered, are not financially sound to say the least.

SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 proposals ignore many sources of data – statistics and studies, both in and out of State – suggesting regionalization does not improve quality of education. Larger class sizes are proven to be the primary reason for lower academic performance and higher dropout rates, disengagement of teaching staff, lower parents' participation in the school activities. Longer rides to schools will affect children's participation in afterschool activities and sports. Forcing young children to travel longer distances will decrease overall quality of life for CT residents. The State of Connecticut needs to look for ways to attract more families to CT, not drive them out of State.

Multiple studies indicate that it is the larger city school districts that would benefit from becoming smaller, more manageable districts where local BOEs would be enabled to address specific needs of their population. Engaging teachers and parents through local PTAs would result in building stronger communities, while engaging students in academics and extra curriculum activities and teaching accountability for personal performance. Keeping school districts local is the only route to maintain high quality education.

SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 ignore the fact that voluntary regionalization has been happening for a while now and has been successful so far. Our local Boards of Education are already working with the town officials to make operations more cost effective. Regionalization and cost sharing are already happening between CT towns on voluntary basis and decisions are made based on local needs. Most of the school districts with 2,000 students or less have regionalized high schools, while elementary/middle schools are remaining local for the reasons stated above.

Local control of public schools is not a luxury, as some may view, it is a necessity. One size does not fit all, different districts have different needs based on their demographics. Some districts have a need for stronger focus on basic academics such as reading and math, while other districts have a need to introduce Early English Learner or Special Education services. Such programs have been successfully implemented in smaller local school districts based on demand and are showing great results, proving again and again that schools should remain under local control.

In my honest opinion as a CT resident and a parent, the State should not be looking for ways to solve its fiscal issues at expense of the most precious people in our lives – our children. Forced regionalization will remove local control over education process, and therefore will destroy the very reason why our local schools are so successful. Any proposal calling for regionalization that uses State funding as incentive is nothing short of extortion and is equally harmful. Any State demanded study on the matter will create uncertainty over the future of our schools, while discouraging new families from moving to CT and encouraging existing families to leave.

Currently CT has the highest-ranking public school districts in the country, attracting families that value the opportunity to raise their children in suburban communities. I ask that you vote against SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 as these bills would destroy what we've all worked so hard to build here in CT for many years – quality education for our children.

Best Regards,

Craig Glatt

Wilton, CT 06897