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39 May Brook Road
Woodstock, CT 06281

Connecticut General Assembly
Education Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3100
Hartford, CT 06106

February 27th, 2019

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

I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874, and any other bill that facilitates or requires forced/mandatory regionalization of the public schools in Connecticut.

Not one of these bills focuses on the quality or the character of the public schools. Rather, all of these bills focus on the costs to the state regarding public education, not on the financial and other costs to the local public schools and to the public school children throughout Connecticut.

The estimated cost savings to the state are too rosy. Studies have shown that potential cost savings, if actually realized (not a certain thing), are counterbalanced by or out competed by potential extra costs. For example, I reference the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's report, *K-12 Regionalization in Connecticut: Pros, Cons and Surprises*.

Eroding the quality of publication throughout the local, public schools is not an outcome that you or I want to see happen.

Large school sizes do not improve the academic achievements of our communities' children. Smaller school districts have been shown to continue to achieve excellent academic scores and rankings, while at the same time to bring out cost effectiveness in money spent. In fact, the best way to engender prudent and meaning full spending of tax payer money on public education resides at the local level, where parents, teachers, administrators, elected officials, and others in a community know best what is needed and what is not needed, as well as how best to spend and not to spend, valuable and limited resources.

Furthermore, local communities are centered, in part, around the public schools. Forcing public schools into large districts destroys community engagement and involvement. This will serve to distance parents and others in a community from the schools. This is not an outcome that you or I want to see happen.

Creating a bureaucracy to administer a forced, large school district not only distances the decision makers from the community they are to serve, but also alienates parents and others in a community from being able to be involved. We do not need more layers of bureaucracy when it comes to public education. There is already too much of that, including unfunded mandates.

An additional concern is that disadvantaged or special needs children will be lost and thereby become underserved in large school districts. This would have an adverse impact on their educational opportunities and outcomes. These children need and benefit from the focus that can be achieved by being in a smaller school system. Helping them is you or I want to see happen.

Connecticut is losing population. In the long run, that drains capital from our state. We need to re-energize Connecticut, and part of that is encouraging people to come to Connecticut to live and to work, and businesses to move to Connecticut provide good paying jobs. Having good quality school systems is an important part of achieving this. By forcing communities throughout Connecticut to merge into large school districts is a disincentive for the growth of our state's economy. Why would people want to stay in or move to Connecticut if the quality of the public schools decreases? Why would businesses want to move to Connecticut if the workers they are seeking to employ do not want to stay in or come to Connecticut?

Private partnerships between citizens, businesses, and non-profit organizations are valuable resources to provide educational opportunities beyond what can be provided by a community's board of education budget. For example, I am the Secretary of the Woodstock Education Foundation, which is a non-profit, local organization in Woodstock that provides money for innovative and educational grants to support programs and technology for the pre-K through 8th grade children. Another organization, the Woodstock PTO, also is active in Woodstock to fund programs for the public school children. This is all done because people and businesses in Woodstock continue, year after year, to be generous of their time and money to support their local public schools. If Woodstock were forced into a large, regional school district, then the incentive for people and businesses in Woodstock to support a school district beyond their town would decrease. This has happened to other organizations of various types. People and businesses want to contribute to the community in which they live and are situated. There is a strong connection. Disrupting this connection would have a bad impact upon the ability of education-minded, non-profit organizations to continue to be successful in what they do. This is not an outcome that you or I want to see happen.

We need to find ways to empower local school systems to continue to focus on educating the children of our communities. SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 do not provide what is needed to move Connecticut's public schools into the future. SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 would set back the public schools.

I strongly oppose SB 738, SB 457, and SB 874 and any other bill that facilitates or requires forced/mandatory regionalization of the public schools in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey A. Gordon" with "MD" written in smaller letters to the right of the name.

Jeffrey A. Gordon, M.D.