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Education Committee Public Hearing
March 1, 2019

Vote No on SB- 874, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CT

To: The Hon. Robert Sanchez, Co-Chair, The Hon. Douglas McCrory, Co-Chair, The Hon. Kathleen M. McCarty, Ranking Member, The Hon. Eric C. Berthel, Ranking Member, The Hon. Jill Barry, Vice Chair, The Hon. Mary Daugherty Abrams, Vice Chair, and members of the Education Committee

As the First Selectman of the Town of Voluntown, I am asking that all members of the Education Committee please vote in opposition to **SB- 874, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT**, which calls for the development of a plan for the “redistricting or consolidation of school services and districts” and penalize small school districts.

Though Voluntown is considered a small school district with approximately 398 students PreK-12, it is run very efficiently. We are sure that regionalizing with other towns will not guarantee us savings at all. We currently have one school for grades PreK-8. Our PreK program is funded by a School Readiness Grant, and we host kids from out of town in the program. We already follow regionalization as our high school students are sent to a choice of 7 different high schools. We pay for the high school tuition and transportation. We own our own school buses. Our Superintendent is part time, and we have one person on staff for the district payroll and human resources. We own and operate our own food services program. If we are forced to regionalize there is no proof that there would be any savings in transportation, personnel, and other operating costs. The Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education work together to keep our costs down- we have no debt.

I believe that forced district consolidation and regionalization could undermine the quality of our student’s education. Consistently, our 3rd and 8th graders have scored #1 and #2 in the annual SBAC testing in both Reading and Math. I fear that our students would not have the same educational opportunities and achievements in a larger school system as they have now.

Lastly, our school is a vital part of our community. Residents of all ages attend programs and athletic events. Every year the school hosts a breakfast for veteran’s on Veteran’s Day that is highly attended. One of the main reasons why families with children, or newlyweds purchase a house in Voluntown is because of the size and quality of our school system.

Instead of forcing towns to regionalize or redistrict, I suggest that the Minimum Budget Requirement is removed so that towns and tax payers have more control over the budget. I suggest that the state invest more money in Special Education or allow the Special Education funds to follow the student. This is the main reason why our school budget has been going up every year.

As the First Selectman, I know our school system is run efficiently. If the time ever comes that we have a drastic decline in students that it is not run efficiently, it should be up to us as a town to implement a plan. This plan should not have to include regionalization if we can come with other cost saving ideas.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tracey Hanson
First Selectman
Town of Voluntown