

## **Testimony on HB 7150, SB 457, SB 738, and SB 874**

Good Afternoon Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Kristin Heckt and I am the Superintendent of Schools in Bolton. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you about HB 7150, SB 457, SB 738, and SB 874 all of which focus on regionalization proposals. Bolton is a beautiful rural community of approximately 5,000 residents, a Pre-K to eight school and a state of the art high school which is a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. We are participating members of the Regional Open Choice Program and are a high school of choice for Columbia students as well. In FY 2018, our per pupil expenditure was \$17,174 and according to the just released Next Generation Accountability Report for the 2017-18 school year, Bolton is 21<sup>st</sup> in the state for K-12 districts and 28<sup>th</sup> overall. This report helps tell the story of how well a district is preparing its students for success in college, careers, and life and provides a more holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance and incorporates student growth over time. I am proud of Bolton's story of always focusing on what is right and best for kids as our data indicates while being fiscally responsible, which among other things, includes utilizing shared services and regionalization efforts where appropriate.

Regionalization that improves the quality of educational programming should be the goal of any regional effort. While savings in operational costs can allow for maintenance or improvement of educational programs, the real motivator for regionalizing should be the value of the educational experience that can be provided to children when communities work together.

With this goal as our north star, Bolton already engages in shared services and regionalizing efforts in a variety of ways including:

- Bolton is a high school of choice for students from Columbia and Hartford.
- The Bolton Public Schools shares services with our municipality including health and dental insurance, electricity and fuel pricing, general and cyber liability insurance, our financial operating system, and IT support.
- Bolton is also part of several regional cooperative efforts including the newly formed CT-CHIP, which is a fully insured health collaborative between the towns and school systems of Bolton, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Columbia, Thompson, and Union.
- Bolton is a member of the Vernon Regional Adult Education program.
- Bolton contracts with EASTCONN for our food service director.
- The Bolton and Coventry Public Schools utilize a shared services model for our Board Certified Behavior Analyst and a Chinese teacher.
- Bolton, Coventry, and Vernon Public Schools have developed a manufacturing pathway collaborative with Goodwin College that will begin next year.

Regionalization of school districts does not always lead to reductions in expenditures – neither short-term nor long-term. I would encourage you to examine data from Maine, Vermont, New York, and Indiana that speaks to this exact point. Research on regionalization efforts in these states indicates that wholesale regionalization based on imposed criteria (e.g., minimum/maximum number of students) can have unpredictable, and often adverse, consequences. While it is clear that fiscal changes need to be made in Connecticut, I encourage you to take the time to fully examine this issue as the decisions you make will directly affect the lives of our most precious resource, our children, and on our collective future.

Should you require further information or have any questions, I can be reached at [kheckt@boltonct.org](mailto:kheckt@boltonct.org) or at 860-643-1569.