

Attention:

Senator Hwang  
Senator Haskell  
Representative Hughes  
Education Testimony Committee

Re: **SB 874**

Dear Senator Hwang et al.,

I respect your efforts and involvement in our State Democracy. As a voter, I would like to make you aware of my opinion on SB 874:

I assume that this Bill was written with the intention of raising state-wide school performance. I support this idea. However, I do not want representatives from anywhere in the State, other than Weston, voting on what's best for our town school system. Each town is unique and has their own specific set of challenges. Currently, Weston is experiencing its own recession in the fact that property prices have dropped by 20% since 2013. This is creating a very real problem in a town with no commercial zone to fall back on. Property taxes are key.

School Road in Weston is the main reason why we chose Weston; the community and small-town feel is second to none. In fact, it's the only reason why we were happy to pay the higher than state average real estate prices and endure the lack of modern-day amenities and increasingly long commute (My husband spends 15 hours per week on his commute to the city.)

If it no longer makes sense; if the quality of our school declines and the property values and quality of life decline also, then we are lucky enough to have portability. We can explore opportunities out with CT. I know we are not the only people who have this option. Unfortunately, I have also heard of families that have discounted CT because of this bill and similar forced regionalization bills and are now looking in NY and NJ instead.

We need to attract NYC salaries into CT. The CT commuter belt is popular because of the quality of the schools and the pride that the towns take in their schools. It was apparent from Day 1 that the town of Weston, the school administration and the town residents, all shared a common goal of making sure that each tax dollar that went towards the BoE budget, was used optimally.

As important as it is; to create social and economic equality for all residents of CT, this measure strikes me as particularly unjust when I read about the tax dollars that are given away to multi-billion-dollar companies. Companies like Bridgewater Associates, who in 2018 delivered the biggest net profit (\$8.1Bn) of any hedge fund firm, ever, are recipients of a \$22M tax payer funded grant. Bridgewater should be proud to be headquartered in CT. And they should be committed to improving the overall

economic health of the state. Not taking away from it. Similarly, in 2014 Starwood Hotels received \$90M in tax payer funded incentives. How many Starwood jobs are there now? Stamford is a ghost town.

We've lived in CA, FL and DC, and when it was time to raise our family, we chose Weston, CT. We chose Weston CT over Southern California because of the strong sense of community, the rural nature of town, and the fact that the Weston Rd School Campus is exceptional and unique.

We don't want to move our family again, however, Bills like this will push us out.

Yours faithfully,  
Sarah Hutchison  
Weston, CT