

Opposition to Bill: SB 874, SB 457, SB 738

February 25, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Myself, Lindsay Jamgochian, and my husband, Michael Jamgochian, are residents here in the town of Somers, CT. We moved from Enfield, CT in late April of 2018 after living there for roughly five years. We are writing in opposition of the recent bills for forced regionalization of small school districts within the state of CT: SB 874, SB 457, SB 738.

At the time of our move, our youngest was in preschool and our oldest in Kindergarten. Our experience with Enfield Public Schools was *MUCH LESS* than desirable, our child was even “lost” (their words specifically was that they could not find) on the first day. After that, we began the process of getting our house on the market to relocate, figuring we would not go far but realizing that the school system in Enfield was not up to par with what we wanted for our children. When seeking out a new district we had separate needs for both children: we wanted to make sure our daughter was challenged appropriately, but also needed several services for our son with the opportunity to utilize others if he needed down the road. When we found a potential house in Somers the research began on the schools. We would NOT move to a new home, even if it was the most ideal, unless the education system met the needs we had. After talking to a LARGE amount of people, researching statistics, joining forums and groups, and more, we found that Somers not only fit the bill but exceeded our expectations. Every contact we had with the administration in terms of registering and beginning the process of transferring my sons IEP was seamless and heartwarming. We felt very comfortable with our decision and things have only improved every step of the way. Being more than halfway through their first official school year, since they were only enrolled for a month and a half in the last, I am amazed at how well this team of teachers, specialists, and admins work together – the district has certainly become a well-oiled machine.

The news of CT moving to regionalize small school districts completely took the wind out of our sails. We are very concerned that the decision does not have the children’s best interest at heart, and that is shown by the fact that there are little details as to what the process would entail but the dollar amount the state will “save” seems to be the focus. Sharing of services will be particularly detrimental for our son – he is followed so closely and has made strides in the few short months he has been enrolled at Somers Elementary. In our previous setting in Enfield, the amount of children who NEEDED services but were denied by the district was absolutely alarming. Enfield was not equipped to handle even a small portion of this number – their priorities were not even close to being aligned with that of Somers.

In terms of sharing administration, which some seem to think is the most basic and painless part, I cannot agree with that either. Our Superintendent is extremely involved with the schools in Somers. He is in the classrooms working and playing with children. He attends events. He knows their names. He has done very well with keeping the lines of communication open with parents and giving updates on anything and everything pertaining to the schools. His interest in this job goes far beyond a paycheck – he truly cares – and that is hard to come by. I have seen the statistics comparing the number

of “higher ups” in our district compared to that of another town, and I do not see anything unnecessary in them. We are comforted by the fact that our small town school system knows our children... especially in the world we live in today. I couldn’t even get the superintendent to meet with me in Enfield, when for nearly an hour, my child was missing. Do you see the difference in priorities here?

Our house in Somers cost us a great deal more. Our taxes are more. We did this because of the schools. From a societal status standpoint, are you even looking at the towns you are lumping together? People pay more to move to towns like Somers for a reason. The town has spent years investing that money into what keeps their status higher and this plan of regionalizing doesn’t even take that into account. Compare Somers, Enfield, Union and Stafford: What is the average household income? What is the average home price? What is the percentage of students who continue to college? What is the average SAT score among other testing? You are not taking into consideration how many people will **leave** due to the regionalization. A larger number than you will probably assume will be looking to move out of state or transfer to private, so in the long run how much will you actually be saving here? The excuse in regards to education socialism and helping “pay for distressed neighbors” is already met by the allowance of school choice. Coming from a middle class family here, it is not okay, nor should we be expected, to sacrifice our children’s education to meet some narrative you have drawn up.

I understand that some changes need to be made in this state – but this is not the way to do it and it will not prove beneficial for the state. I strongly hope that you will oppose SB 874, SB 457 and SB 738, and any other legislation that forces the regionalization of school districts in Connecticut.

Do not touch our schools.

Sincerely,

Lindsay M. Jamgochian

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