

Dear Education Committee and Governor Lamont,
Re: SB457, SB738, and SB874

I want to register my strong opposition to any form of state driven regionalization of the school districts in CT. This is especially true for any bills like SB457, SB738, and SB874 that considers or sets up a committee that is allowed to recommend forced consolidation.

I am a CT native that grew up in New Canaan, where my dad was on the Board Of Ed, and I attended an excellent public school. This was paid for and maintained by New Canaan's high property cost and high property taxes and preserved by it's very active local Board Of Ed. Post college I moved back to CT where I started a job in Stamford and rented a Stamford apartment. Then I got married and we bought a home in Norwalk to be close to our local jobs. When my wife and I considered starting a family a few years later, we searched for a town with good schools for raising our future children. We picked Wilton and sold our Norwalk house. We did this because of locally controlled schools and although we could not afford New Canaan, Wilton was just within our reach. We paid a premium of our hard earned money (house cost and property taxes) as well as longer commutes just to give our children the right education.

We now have 2 children ages 8 and 11 in 3rd and 6th grades. We are very grateful we moved to Wilton. In fact, even when I worked in NYC job for 3 years I put up with a 4 hours a day commute to keep my children in the school that was right for them. I attend the annual town meetings to defend our locally controlled school budget. If I had wanted a bigger school I could have saved money and commuting time and just stayed in Norwalk. Currently both my wife and I work in CT and pay CT income tax as well as high Wilton property tax. We do not mind because it's our kids future on the line and we value their education, safety and health above all. We stay in Wilton even though as software engineers it would be easier and more profitable to work in NYC and live closer to NYC (New Jersey or Westchester).

This morning we just started to have the hard conversation about whether we need to move because of these proposed bills, and should it be this summer. We figure we have already lost a lot of potential value in our home by the existence of these bills. The only reason most people choose Wilton is for the schools. Over the next month we will be evaluating where outside of CT better suits our family. It may be MA, NY, NJ, or PA as we have family in these locations. These states are not actively attacking their local schools. We hope that if we move ASAP we can recoup most of the value from our home, however, we fear the longer we wait the more we will lose and the harder it will be to afford a home near a school we want in another state. Even debating this is done with a sad heart as I am a true CT native but I must do right by my kids. Thankfully we have portable jobs and can move out of CT. Unfortunately for the state it will be losing our tax base.

Hopefully you can put our mind at rest and put an end to this idea of forced regionalization, as we will decide soon whether we are going to leave. Connecticut has always been about small

towns with great schools. This is why my parents raised me here and why I am raising my children here. Please do the right thing and do not kill a hard earned Connecticut resource!

-Joshua Kesselman
Wilton, CT